

# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

PART 3  
*Chapters IX - XII*



BS2615.3  
.L4513  
1995x  
pt. 3  
Spiritan  
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FRANCIS MARY PAUL LIBERMANN CSSp  
TRANSLATED BY MYLES L. FAY CSSp

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*Congregation of the Holy Spirit*  
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# **JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES**

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN



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# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
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GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

*PART III*

*Chapters IX - XII*

FRANCIS MARY PAUL LIBERMANN CSSp  
TRANSLATED BY MYLES L. FAY CSSp

PARACLETE PRESS

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Jesus through  
Jewish Eyes,  
A Spiritual Commentary  
on the  
Gospel of St. John,  
Part III, Chapters IX-XII

by Francis Libermann CSSp  
translated by Myles L. Fay CSSp

ISBN 0 946639 44 2

First published in 2005 by  
Paraclete Press,  
Blackrock College,  
Blackrock,  
Co. Dublin,  
Ireland.

Tel. 01-2752147

Fax: 01-2834267

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## Foreword

Those who take up Part III of this *Commentary* on St John's Gospel may find it difficult reading. While historians of spirituality have enthused about its mystical qualities, the present day person is in danger of finding style and content so remote from contemporary approaches to Scripture that they may miss some of the treasures that lie within. Treasures undoubtedly lie within these pages to enrich the heart of the believer, of the one who accepts that eternal life is to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Within these reflections on the life of Jesus lies the experience of one who knew Jesus intimately in his own heart. That awareness and quiet contemplative sense of the presence of Jesus, Lord of all, is what these pages communicate.

To arrive at that awareness, however, several hurdles have to be crossed — hurdles of language, thought, unspoken assumption and custom. Not only those of the biblical world but those of the world Francis Libermann lived in — a Franco-German Jewish home, Sulpician spirituality, mid-19th century French Catholic theology with its impoverished scholastic theology, Jansenistic morality and Latinised linguistic style. The journey the reader takes is two-fold — back to mid 19th century France to Francis Libermann — and secondly, in his company, to the faith world of St John. If readers have difficulty extending tolerance and understanding to times and places other than their own, this book is not for them. If they can cross these barriers, then they will find themselves immersed in a profound and loving awareness of the one true God made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Some aspects of Libermann's approach to Scripture may tend to deter present day readers. Accustomed to a reading of Scripture which concentrates on its historical and literary sense, one may find his free-ranging reflections unusual. His approach is more like that of a medieval writer than a modern, though anyone who has used the *lectio divina* method of biblical meditation will probably feel at home with this commentary. Medieval scholars identified four

senses of Scripture, the literal or historical sense; the moral sense which applies the Word of God to human life; the anagogical sense which sees the future life of heaven foreshadowed in the text; the allegorical sense which describes how the New Testament is figured in the Old. Libermann, following the custom of the time, distinguishes broadly the literal and spiritual senses, i.e. the first of these listed above and the other three grouped under the title 'spiritual' sense. Generally speaking, once one accepts this broader approach to Scripture, the spiritual interpretation is readily acceptable.

There is, perhaps, one exception to this. I refer to a practical kind of allegorical interpretation which takes one element in the Bible and hangs a meaning on it which bears no direct relationship to the original text. One example is Libermann's account of the multiplication of the loaves in Jn 6. He sees the five loaves as referring to the five wounds of the passion, the twelve baskets of leftovers as referring to the tribes of Israel, the fragments gathered as signifying unused graces in the Church's treasury. This usage recurs in Libermann's commentary on the raising of Lazarus from the dead in Chapter 11 and elsewhere. Such artificial association may not stir our hearts. However, it forms but a small proportion of the *Commentary's* text. While his deepest purpose is to bring out the spiritual message of the Gospel as he perceives it, the literal sense is the main concern of his exegesis.

His sense of the divine, of its primacy and transcendence, leads Libermann to write at times in language which seems to depreciate human nature and its embodiment in human flesh. The very words nature and flesh have specific meanings within Libermann's terminology which differ from our everyday speech. We use the words nature and natural for what is around and within us and for what most befits what the world and we ourselves are. In Libermann's vocabulary nature usually refers to humanity's condition after the Fall. In other words it speaks of that aspect of our being which is prone to sin, which tends towards evil, rebels against God. It is a code-word for our sinful tendencies as opposed to the Godward tendencies provided by grace. Similarly *flesh* for us refers



to our humanity — to our bodies, as when we say, 'This is more than flesh and blood can bear.' *Flesh* for Libermann refers approximately to the same aspect of our being as *nature*, the tendency to spiritual blindness and self-centred action which afflicts us all.

Modern readers also find that Libermann undervalues earthly and human realities. His attention and commitment is focused directly on God. This attitude of mind comes partly from his Jansenistic environment, partly from his overriding concern to live in communion with God, to put into practice the first Christian commandment, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Mt 22:37). This of course repeats the injunction of Deuteronomy 6:5 — therefore a command which was in Libermann's mind and heart since early childhood. His own relationships with others show him to have been a warm affectionate friend to members of his own family and fellow missionaries, deeply concerned that his colleagues were adequately provided for with food, clothing and the necessities of life. As a missionary superior he repeatedly put his men on guard against neglecting health and well being. His undoubtedly burning zeal for God did not prevent him recognising, using and thanking God for the material blessings which God provided for himself and his followers.

Another area which may disconcert the present-day reader is his use of Trinitarian theology to explain the text. Libermann turns to the theology of Jesus' two natures, human and divine, to comment on the texts in John's Gospel, notably in Chapter V, where he speaks of the joint action of Father and Son. Some readers may have difficulty with this approach. Having two natures, human and divine, implies that in Jesus both his divine mind and will as well as his human mind and will are at work in each situation. In God, one and three, there is only one mind and one will, common to the three persons of the Trinity. Consequently, there is complete unity between the Father and Son in thought and choice. What the Father thinks, the Son thinks, what the Father chooses the Son chooses.

Jesus' humanity is so harmonised with his divine nature, that his human mind and will are perfectly synchronised with his divine

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mind and will. As a result complete harmony exists in mind and thought at all three levels of activity — between the Father's mind and will, Jesus' divine mind and will and his human mind and will. As one might expect, Libermann gives priority to the divine. This in brief is the background to Libermann's commentary on texts such as Jn 5:19, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.' This harmony between Father and Son stretches across the range of the Son's actions, human and divine. In his divine nature Jesus does whatever the Father does; in his human nature he thinks and chooses in perfect harmony with his divine thought and choice.

Readers may find that Libermann was so focused on Jesus' divine nature that he minimised his humanity. In this presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, he proposes a supremely transcendental image of Christ whose earthly involvements, even bodily functions like eating and drinking, are a matter of choice. One commentator notes that in this he borders on the unorthodox. One can allow certain liberties of language in this kind of exposition. Nonetheless, the general reader brought up on a 'low Christology', which stresses the humanity of Jesus, may not find Libermann's perspective immediately attractive. However, in prayer one may come to see the direction of his thought which points unswervingly to the ultimate goal of human striving, communion in Christ with the Father. As St Paul might say, our real life is hidden with Christ in God. This is Libermann's perspective. Consequently, his interpretation of the Fourth Gospel refers more to this ultimate stage of human endeavour rather than to any stops along the way.

The majesty and unity of God are one of the great themes running through this commentary as it does through the Gospel of St John. St John's Gospel presents us with what in current theology is termed a 'high Christology' that is a view of Christ which sees him primarily as God, secondarily as man. St John's focus on Christ's divinity is what Libermann takes up and enlarges to fill the screen. His approach to Jesus is that of the devout Jew to Yahweh, one of adoration, submission and self-giving. That same awareness leads

him to grapple in his reflection with the problems the text poses, for example in chapters I and V, of reconciling the unity of God with the diversity of persons — and the unity of the divine person with the duality of natures in the Word-made-flesh. Again, some may find this difficult reading.

Libermann's reflections lead him briefly in Chapter I to expound the theology of the Trinity of his day. Following St Augustine, Christian theology saw in the working of the human mind a model which provides a glimpse of how in God there can be one divine nature in three divine persons. The human mind, as the origin of all its activities, comes to know itself through an insight from which flows a concept — a mental 'word' or definition of what it has perceived. When what is perceived is good and beautiful, then a movement of the will — in love — takes place. In God this concept, definition or mental 'word' which expresses the infinite being of the Father God is the eternal Word of God. This Word is equal in all things to the reality it expresses. The Word (or Son of God as we more commonly name him) is equal to the Father in being because he is the perfect image, replica of the Father. The Father is infinite in being; so too his expression of himself in Word — as an artist might express himself perfectly in music, verse or stone. Similarly, when the Father perceives the wonder of his own being, love flows. And because his being is infinite so too is the love infinite which follows knowledge. That love is, of course, the one we call Holy Spirit. The Spirit is equal to Father and Son in all things precisely because the one who loves — the Father — is infinite. The Spirit too is commensurate with the Father, identical with him in all things except that he is the eternal love of God, directed firstly to the Father himself — and then to creation — to everything and everyone the Father has made. This theology of the Blessed Trinity underlies Libermann's reflections on the Word who was in the beginning, '...was with God, and ...was God'(Jn 1:1). This same theology underlines Libermann's commentary in Chapter 5: 17 - 30 and in Chapter 10: 38ff.

Finally, the Latin text used in this edition is the one which Francis Libermann followed in his manuscript. The English translation is

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taken from the Revised Standard Version . In places the *Commentary* follows the French translation the author had to hand. Where this differs notably from the RSV version, the variant is provided in brackets. The *Commentary* is provided in English translation primarily as a text for spiritual reflection. Scholars are referred to the critical edition, *François Libermann, Commentaire de Saint Jean*, Nouvelle Cité, Paris, 1987, the work of Frs Joseph Lecuyer, Amedeo Martins, Bernard Noel, Alphonse Gilbert. English readers are indebted to the untiring labours of Fr Myles L. Fay CSSp for this translation carried out for the most part in difficult mission circumstances. The publishers are grateful to those in Ireland and in Kenya who prepared this text: Fr Thomas O'Sullivan R.I.P., Philomena Powell, Margaret O'Sullivan, Mary Murphy, Deirdre Powell, designers Steven Hope and Alan Ennis.

**Brian Gogan CSSp**  
**General Editor**

## INTRODUCTION

Francis Libermann was not sure himself when he was born, for the *anno domini* calendar had been suspended in France after the French Revolution and it was not always clear when Year 1 of the new order began in different parts of the country. In fact he was born on 12 April 1802 in the Jewish ghetto in Saverne, Alsace, Eastern France, where he was fifth son of the local rabbi. As his father's favourite, he was meant in turn to succeed him. Francis, sensitive and intelligent, gave himself most zealously to his Jewish devotions and studies as celebrated and dictated by his fanatical father. In practice that meant he knew the Old Testament thoroughly in the original languages as well as much of the Talmud. The New Testament did not exist for him or his family and milieu, while a crucifix, as we know from anecdotes of his childhood, was an object of dread.

Unexpectedly some of his older brothers became Catholics when they left the ghetto for studies. Jacob (as he then was) also left home to study but he passed from Judaism into atheism, carefully concealing this from his father. The light came with a copy of St John's Gospel — his preference for it for the rest of his life is no wonder! — in unpointed Hebrew, which a fellow-student, less proficient in Hebrew, asked him to translate. It was not yet the road to Damascus (an apt allusion in Libermann's case) but a firm start. After more study, hesitation and prayer, he suddenly threw himself on his knees and acknowledged that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in whom he believed again, was indeed the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jacob was baptised Francis Mary Paul on Christmas Eve 1826 in Paris. His conversion was total. Straight away he asked to prepare for the priesthood and was admitted to the great St Sulpice seminary, model of strict ecclesiastical training. There he learnt the clerically accepted way of living along with his French religious and spiritual vocabulary, which of itself was ill-equipped for the thoroughly Jewish (and correct, as far as they went) notions of God that he had built up and lived by for 24 years.

Studies progressed satisfactorily until he suddenly and literally fell with epilepsy on the very eve of receiving major orders. That barred one from the priesthood but he was allowed to remain on at the St Sulpice summer residence of Issy on the outskirts of Paris as a sort of bursar's assistant. Here his charism of spiritual director with a particular insight

into St John and St Paul showed itself and flowered. Among his admiring student friends at Issy were two who would influence the rest of his life, Eugene Tisserant and Frederick LeVasseur. These two were beginning to dream of helping the liberated slaves of their respective homelands, Haiti and Bourbon (Reunion), both French colonies. They approached Libermann, first as a spiritual guide and then as a possible leader of this 'work', as they called it. Meantime Libermann was invited to leave Paris for the city of Rennes in Brittany to become novice-master of a small group, mostly priests, who constituted the beginnings of a regrouping of the Eudist Congregation after the French Revolution. This was in 1837 and the acolyte Libermann was 35.

On the feast of SS Simon and Jude, 28 October 1839, Francis, in what he considered a supernatural enlightenment, made the decision to throw in his lot with his two friends in founding an apostolic work on behalf of the Black race. The first thing to do was draw up a rule and present it in Rome. He went to Rome, where he remained exactly twelve months, from Epiphany 1840 to Epiphany 1841. While there he composed this *Commentary on St John's Gospel* as well as his *Provisional Rule* and a detailed *Memorandum* for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (now the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples).

That year completed, he returned to France, was ordained priest at Amiens in September 1841 (his epileptic fits had largely passed) and governed his young, fervent, zealous, growing apostolic band of missionaries, now called the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, until his death ten years later at the age of 49. But one more major event of his life must be told. In 1848 at the behest of Rome he fused his society with the Holy Ghost Congregation, which had been founded in Paris in 1703 by a youthful seminarian, Claude-Francis Poullart des Places. Libermann was unanimously elected as the eleventh Superior General of the renewed Holy Ghost Congregation under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He died in that capacity on 2 February 1852 and is buried in Paris, as is Claude des Places. He was declared Venerable in 1910. The Holy Ghost Congregation acknowledges both men as its founders.

Francis Libermann composed this *Commentary* during his one-year stay in Rome, 1840, at the age of 38, while still a cleric in minor orders. It has been calculated that he worked swiftly, probably completing it in less than three months, although he kept touching it up for years afterwards, without however, continuing it beyond the verse he had



stopped at in Rome: chapter 12, verse 23. He wrote on simple copybook paper with a fair number of erasures, marginal notes and additions. He tells us himself he had only a Latin *New Testament* to work from, did not use or refer to any commentaries and scarcely remembered his theological studies of ten years before.

The physical arrangements were not conducive. He lived in a rented attic at the top of a building (now demolished) near the church of St Louis des Français and the Pantheon. This attic is reconstructed on the roof of the present French seminary in the same area of Rome. It is so low that the sloping roof allows one to stand upright only at one side of the room. The heat of it in the Roman summer, the time he was composing the commentary, must have been stifling. Moreover, he was living very frugally and apprehensively; he was waiting day by day to hear how the authorities had accepted his memorandum on his proposed foundation. As he says, he penned these notes to pass his time in a devout way and had no intention of anyone else ever reading them. Only his confessor's intervention prevented him from burning them. The original MS is kept in the Holy Ghost Congregation archives at Chevilly near Paris.

Twenty years after Fr Libermann's death, the *Commentary* was published in an excellent production at the mission printing-press at Ngazobil near Zuiginchor in present-day Senegal. It seems to have been reproduced from a fair copy made, with most of his writings, by the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in Paris. Early in this century it was published again with many additional footnotes which are not Libermann's at the Holy Ghost Congregation Motherhouse in Paris. A third edition, completely revised in the light of the original, was published by Fr Alphonse Gilbert, Nouvelle Cité, Paris 1987; this is the text I have worked from. It has never been printed in English but a typed translation by Fr Walter Van de Putte circulated in some areas of the Holy Ghost Congregation.

Fr Michael Cahill successfully defended a doctorate thesis on the *Commentary* at the Institut Catholique, Paris, in 1987, in which he concluded that the specific references by Libermann to Judaic sources are extremely few. This authoritative work has been published (Michael Cahill CSSp, *Francis Libermann's Commentary on the Gospel of St John, An Investigation of the Rabbinical and French School Influences*, Paraclete Press, Dublin, 1987). Within the Holy Ghost Congregation, issue no 20 of *Spiritane Papers* (December 1986) dealt with selected aspects of the

*Commentary*, to which it was dedicated. The standard biographies of Fr Libermann naturally only treat of it summarily.

It is easy enough to situate this work within Francis Libermann's spiritual itinerary. For exactly the first half of his life he lived a thoroughly Jewish spirituality, until the age of 24. The second half was Catholic, divided as follows. At St Sulpice and Issy he was influenced by the French School of spirituality. Indeed it was in the idiom of that school that he learnt the French language, so for religious topics he really had no choice of vocabulary. This period lasted some eleven years. During his two years in Rennes he immersed himself in the spirituality of St John Eudes, going so far as to copy out in his own handwriting much of St John Eudes' works. The MS is preserved in the Eudist archives.

It has been argued in two doctorate theses that Francis at this point made a second break in his spirituality. The first break had been to leave Judaism for Christianity. The second, which can be dated precisely, 28 October 1839, was the break from a seminary-clerical Catholic life to a worldwide missionary and universalist vision of the church. Fr Christopher Burke's thesis (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 1975) plausibly argues that position, while Fr Bernard Kelly's thesis (Institut Catholique, Paris, 1980 published as *Life Began at Forty*, Dublin, 1982) argues a spiritual development from the same date. The *Commentary* comes at this moment, just when the new missionary vision is added to the previous Jewish, atheistic, Sulpician and Eudist influences in his life, not to mention his very individual appropriation of each of these strands and arrangement of their meshing.

Outside the influences of this *Commentary* are the remaining ten years of Libermann's life, during which the missionary and universalist spirituality matured. Whether deliberately or not, this turning point had been clearly indicated by the moment in St John's Gospel where Fr Libermann stopped and, it would seem, never felt an urge to continue beyond. 'Some Greeks' had come to see Jesus, and Jesus says, 'Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified' (Jn 12:23). The missionary work of the Church was starting; so was Francis Libermann's.

How is Libermann's work to be classified among commentaries on St John's Gospel? It has been considered serious enough by the staff of the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem to have been placed in their library; after all a commentary on St John by a convert Jew is not an everyday occurrence

and for that reason alone it would deserve attention. A glance will show that it is not in the class of scientific exegesis found in modern volumes by Rudolph Schnackenburg or Raymond E. Brown, even though Libermann's knowledge of Hebrew from childhood would be the envy of many scholars. Unfortunately Libermann's was a time when Catholic spirituality underplayed the value of the *Old Testament* and we must regret now that he allowed so little of his vast knowledge of the *Old Testament* to appear in this *Commentary*. It is rather a meditative approach to the Gospel, extracting reflections and lessons from the phrases one by one. With respect it may be compared to some of the patristic commentaries, which in their turn fall short of modern scientific requirements as exegesis, yet are of theological value in their *genre*. Libermann's idea would be that a reading of these pages would drive one to one's knees before the person of Jesus, and the first one he wanted to lead into prayer was himself.

A helpful key to an interpretation may be the autobiographical. In the first chapter especially, where healthy, holy young Jewish men come face to face with Jesus of Nazareth, as Libermann had at 24, Libermann sees his own story in the phrases used both of Jesus and of the apostles. Later when he castigates the Pharisees for their non-acceptance of Jesus, he is implicitly castigating his father and his Jewish teachers, who did not allow Jesus to enter their lives and change them as he had his. In analysing other interviews of Jesus with people throughout the Gospel, he will have drawn on his wide experience of seminarians and lay people whom he had directed for fifteen years and whose relationships with Jesus he knew in their subtlety.

Finally a word on the translation. Francis Libermann was over twenty when he learnt French. He learned it sufficiently to make it a clear and adequate instrument for his thoughts but not sufficiently to become a Racine or Victor Hugo (born the same year as Libermann). His vocabulary remained limited. The work will never be crowned by the *Académie Française* for its purity of diction or for its contribution to the French language. I have translated it *telle qu'elle*, while breaking the periods into shorter sentences and using more of the active voice of the verb. But the translation remains literal, there are no paraphrases, no omissions, and the repetitiousness of some duller passages remains. The spirituality of the French School provided the only religious terminology he possessed in French. This could conceivably be transposed into terms

current in some modern writing, terms like enrichment, commitment, polarity, dynamics, vulnerability, brokenness, awareness, challenging, beautiful, exciting, having a feel for or a sense of, being authentic and so on, but I have not used them; they would ring false in the context.

I wish to thank Fr Brian Gogan sincerely for undertaking this publication as well as for his felicitous choice of the main title, and all those over a lifetime who have helped me to appreciate 'the great Francis Libermann' (Pope John Paul II).

Myles L. Fay CSSp  
Enugu, Nigeria,  
2 February 1993

141st Anniversary of Francis Libermann's Death.



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Cure of the Man Born Blind

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Et praeteriens Jesus, vidit hominem<br/>caecum a nativitate.</i> | 1. <i>As he passed by, he saw a man<br/>blind from his birth.</i> |
|--|---|

Our Lord in the act of passing before this man born blind turned his attention to him in order to draw the attention of his apostles too, so that they would ask him, 'what shall we see in a moment?' Our divine Master stirred up thoughts in his apostles to instruct them and make them more alert to his teaching.

Although this cure of the blind man was directly for God's glory, as we shall see, it does not prevent this external act from being a figure of higher spiritual things done by our Lord. The circumstances in which he worked this miracle show that he had the special aim of using it to instruct us about his principal work.

The cure of the man born blind is an image of our soul, which is also born blind, without the light of God and incapable of even hoping for its cure. The terms used by the evangelist are noteworthy: 'he was blind from his birth', as if his birth contributed to his being blind. This happens to us: our souls are born blind, by reason of their descent from Adam.

Our Lord cured the blind man in passing. 'Passing by, he saw'. This means that as regards our spiritual healing, although it is our Lord now entered into his glory who imparts the grace, we must not be mistaken. He does this in virtue of the mysteries he accomplished while passing through our world on his way to glory. These mysteries contain the graces that heal us.

It was then, accomplishing these mysteries, that he merited the graces he desired to confer on us; it was then he looked at each one of the blind persons who was to be cured, to offer his merits to his Father and apply them effectively to each individual. 'And passing by he saw...' The word 'saw' does not mean he surveyed the scene. He had a general look at all those around but he saw

this blind man in particular and saw that he was blind. And why did he see him? To cure him. Likewise spiritually, when accomplishing our life's mysteries in this passing life, our Lord had a general view of all people, even of those who were not to profit by his merits, but he saw in a special way those who were to benefit in a particular way.

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|---|---|
| 2. <i>Et interrogaverunt eum discipuli</i><br><i>"Rabbi, ejus: quis peccavit, hic aut</i><br><i>parentes ejus, ut caecus nasceretur"?</i> | 2. <i>And his disciples asked him, "who</i><br><i>sinned, this man or his parents,</i><br><i>that he was born blind?"</i> |
|---|---|

It was commonly thought among the Jews that all earthly evils had their origin in some sin. Since this man was blind from birth the apostles wanted to know whether it was for a sin of their parents these children were punished or if God punished beforehand the sins the children would commit when they became capable of them? Both ideas are false, but were supported by the learned among the Jews. It is probable that this doctrine was held among them in the apostles' time, for they had lost sight of the true principles of divine things through their false traditions.

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|---|--|
| 3. <i>Respondit Jesus: "Neque hic peccavit</i><br><i>neque parentes ejus; sed ut</i><br><i>manifestentur opera Dei in illo.</i> | 3. <i>Jesus answered, "It was not that</i><br><i>this man sinned, or his parents,</i><br><i>but that the works of God might be</i><br><i>manifest in him".</i> |
|---|--|

By these words our Lord corrected the three errors of his apostles. First of all, it is not necessary that a sin be actually committed for God to send sufferings and sickness into the world; it is often for a purpose dictated by mercy. This instruction was important for our Lord's disciples because, since people had to leave the law of fear and the law of promise to enter into the law of love, things had to change radically. According to the ancient law of fear God punished sins on earth, inflicting terrible chastisements. From this belief came the mistaken idea that earthly evils came as a punishment for sins, a belief which is not

true even for those times, as witness Job, Tobit and a host of others. The law of promise promised earthly goods as a reward for its observance.

The law of love is quite different; everything in this law points to eternal glory, and upon earth sorrow and suffering are reasons for joy and love, since suffering comes only to glorify God in his children, who thereby resemble our Lord and participate more perfectly in his immense merits.

As regards the second false doctrine Jesus declares that children are not punished for the sins of their parents. Finally he corrects the third erroneous teaching affirming that God does not punish sins not yet committed.

By the words 'neither has this man sinned, nor his parents', our Lord did not mean that they had never committed sin, but that the blindness resulted neither from the man's own sin nor from a sin of his parents. Our Lord used this turn of phrase to hint that the blindness was a consequence of original sin. If he had said: it is not his sin nor the sin of his parents, it might be concluded that the blindness was a consequence of original sin; for that sin is the blind man's as well as his parents' .

Our Lord, by saying 'sinned', points to a sinful action carried out by the man or his parents. He says that the blindness did not come from that source but from a sin which neither the man nor his parents committed, namely, original sin. He borrowed the very words of the apostles to let them see that he was replying according to the meaning they gave them. It was not a question of knowing whether the man or his parents had ever sinned, but whether it was a sin committed by the man or his parents that caused the blindness.

To understand properly what our Lord wants to make clear we must realize that all are guilty of original sin and that all evils which afflict body and soul come and flow from original sin, like the blindness of a particular newborn child. But we also ask why God struck this child rather than another. His providence has a reason for everything it does. Nothing escapes his divine view,

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nothing is made without him and nothing is done by him by chance. The apostles' question is not yet answered: why has this man been blind from birth? So our Lord adds: 'In order that the works of God might be made manifest in him'. O blessed blindness, given for a purpose so glorious for God!

Our Lord speaks of the 'works of God', because in this blessed blind man three principal works were manifested. There was, first, a work of power, which produced a new creation in that man, a creation which is not in the usual order of providence; there was a work of mercy, which brought about the man's salvation at the same time as his cure; there was a work of justice, in the blinding of the Pharisees, who became dreadfully hardened and blinded on this occasion.

Our Lord said: 'that the works of God might be made manifest...'; he did not say: that the works may be executed, because these divine works are accomplished every day in souls in a spiritual way. And in this circumstance, these works, so often done in secret, were to be executed with great splendour to show clearly to a whole people what it was to expect from its Saviour. For God's operation in souls appeared so manifestly on this occasion that the image almost disappeared to let the object which the image represents be seen clearly unveiled.

4. *Me oportet operari opera ejus qui misit me, donec dies est: venit nox quando nemo potest operari.*

4. *We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is still day; night comes, when no one can work.*

5. *Quamdiu sum in mundo, lux sum mundi.*

5. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

The Father's plans for his creatures must be accomplished by our Lord: 'I must do his works'. If we wish to be cured of our blindness, let us go to Jesus. He was sent to cure us. His Father has sent him only to carry out his works, in order that all divine actions be done by our Lord. He says: 'of him who sent me', to

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show that this is his mission and that it is in virtue of his mission he performs the works.

‘While it is day’. He has done all the works of his Father for the salvation of human beings during his stay on earth, as was said above. Although during our Lord’s life on earth they were not completely perfect. Perfection was reached only when all his mysteries were accomplished and the Holy Spirit had come with all his gifts. That did not prevent our Lord from carrying out all those works at that stage, doing everything his Father desired.

So, although his mysterious deeds did not have full effective power before his Ascension, our Lord’s presence did accomplish true works on behalf of his Father even before the mysteries attained perfection. But after our Lord died the whole following period until the descent of the Holy Spirit was like a night of darkness, when no one was able to produce or impart grace. This is what our divine Master meant: ‘I must do the works of my Father while it is day, that is, during the time I am still on earth, for as long as I live on earth I am the light of the world, but the night will come when I, who am the light, will no longer be in this world; then there will be no light and my Holy Spirit will not yet have descended to impart the still more brilliant rays which will be mine in the glory of my Father. During that night no one will be able to work, all souls will be in darkness’.

6. *Haec cum dixisset, expuit in  
terram et fecit lutum ex sputo,  
et linivit lutum super oculos ejus.*

6. *As he said this, he spat on  
the ground and made clay  
of the spittle and anointed  
the man’s eyes with the clay,*

Our all-powerful Saviour could have restored the man’s sight with a single word. He preferred to do all these actions signifying what takes place for our spiritual healing. The saliva from our Lord’s mouth represents the grace that comes from the Word of God through the sacred humanity, which is like a mouth through which he communicates himself for our salvation. This humanity is the source of our cure.

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The ground signifies our soul, which is absolutely like earth, sterile by itself and incapable of producing anything. It needs rain from the sky and heat from the sun. Our Lord spat on the earth to express the giving of God's grace transmitted to our souls through the sacred mouth of the Word, that is, his humanity is a means of communication with us, as our mouth communicates our thoughts. He made a kind of paste to apply to the diseased organ, to show that our cure cannot take place without our receiving his grace in our soul. It is not his grace by itself that cures us, it becomes a source of healing only when joined with our will which receives it unresistingly.

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| <p>7. <i>Et dixit ei: Vade, lava in natatoria Siloe (quod interpretatur Missus). Abiit ergo, et lavit, et venit videns.</i></p> | <p>7. <i>saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.</i></p> |
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By the action of having him wash in the fresh and peaceful water of Siloam, our Lord wanted to show the significance of baptism. The power giving sight to the man was not the water of Siloam but the saliva mixed with earth. Nevertheless it was in the water of Siloam that the miracle was to take place. Likewise baptism itself is not productive by itself but grace, received in the will by and in that sacrament is productive. The water of baptism is only water, the action of pouring the water is nothing of itself either, and the same applies to the words of the one administering the baptism; they have no power of themselves. But the words joined to the action of pouring and the water form this sacrament; the sacrament, having in itself the power of our Lord, who gave it to us and from whom it issued, gives the grace it signifies. This grace received in the soul restores our vision of God's light.

'And he returned seeing'. After being baptized we return seeing, because in this baptism, through the grace that is given to our souls, we receive infused faith, and this faith is the true eyesight of our souls; those who have not got it do not see.



The pool of Siloam, the name of which is interpreted as 'being sent', signifies baptism rather than any other stream. Baptism is also a bath given to us by our Lord. All its strength comes from the fact that it is given; it issues from the sanctuary of our Lord's heart to wash our souls of the horrible stains of sin.

Moreover, according to the prophets (cf Is 8:6) the waters of Siloam were peaceful; and in this it represents the peace our souls receive in this sacrament. Baptism is a water of peace, putting us at peace with God and ourselves.

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| 8. <i>Itaque vicini, et qui viderant eum prius quia mendicus erat, dicebant: Nonne hic est qui sedebat, et mendicabat? dicebant: Quia hic est.</i>                  | 8. <i>The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?"</i>                                       |
| 9. <i>Alii autem: Nequaquam, sed similis est ei. Ille vero dicebat: Quia ego sum.</i>   | 9. <i>Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man."</i>   |
| 10. <i>Dicebant ergo ei: Quomodo aperti sunt tibi oculi?</i>  | 10. <i>They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"</i>   |
| 11. <i>Respondit: Ille homo, qui dicitur Jesus, lutum fecit, et unxit oculos meos, et dixit mihi: Vade ad natatoria Siloe, et lavi. Et abii, et lavi, et video.</i> | 11. <i>He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight."</i> |

This was a most extraordinary miracle in that it required a new creation of sight, and no human means ever did or could accomplish a similar cure. So everybody was astonished, and because of the great wonder it provoked some said: 'This is not the man who was born blind but one who resembles him'. Since these people had not witnessed the miracle, they could not conceive how the man could have recovered his sight. This astonishment shows how great the miracle was in their eyes and how great the impression it made. It also goes to show that the man had really

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been blind from birth and was so known.

To his questioners he replied: 'That man who is called Jesus' and so on. He had not yet a fully enlightened faith. Our divine Saviour had opened the eyes of his body, but the light he received for his body had not yet pierced his soul; nevertheless it had disposed him to receive light for the soul as well. Our Lord begins with what is easier, and then goes on to the more difficult. Now it is incomparably more difficult to cure our soul's blindness than our body's, because our soul is affected by an incomparably greater and more complicated illness than blindness of body. The disorder is more extensive.

The great misfortune is that we love our blindness and the manifold ills that constitute it, we offer resistance to our loving physician, we reject all the remedies he offers us whereas we are always quite ready to get a cure for our body. 'That man'. He did not know it was the Son of God; he took him for an ordinary man, yet he already thought highly of him. 'Who is called Jesus', as if to say: that extraordinary man who is called Jesus and whom you know well. The name Jesus, moreover, was most suitable for him in the circumstance, because this adorable name means Saviour and here our Lord saved both body and soul by one action.

12. *Et dixerunt ei: Ubi est ille?*  
*Ait: Nescio.*

12. *They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."*

The Jews asked where he was. We may presume the question was inspired by malice, as we shall see in the next verse. He replied: 'I do not know'. This shows he had only a beginning of faith. When he has made some sacrifice, when he has defended that faith to his own cost, when he has fought for it, then it will be stronger and clearer and the divine light will be his reward. Now he still says 'I do not know'. He only thinks of his luck to be cured. He has received a grace and acknowledged it and this is his faith. But he thinks of himself and not of his wonderful benefactor, and therein lies the imperfection of his faith.

13. *Adducunt eum ad Phariseos  
qui caecus fuerat.*

13. *They brought to the Pharisees the  
man who had formerly been blind.*

The people who were filled with such astonishment at this cure and saw a great miracle in it were not really touched by it to their profit; it was only a subject of scandal and loss for their souls. For want of finding Jesus himself, they took the man who had benefited by the miracle and brought him to the Pharisees, whom they knew to be Jesus' greatest enemies, no doubt in order to have them condemn him. Had they found Jesus himself they would have brought him if he had given them the power.

14. *Erat autem sabbatum quando  
lutum fecit Jesus, et aperuit oculos  
ejus.*

14. *Now it was a sabbath day  
when Jesus made the clay and  
opened his eyes.*

The reason they brought the man to the Pharisees was to furnish a means of condemning our Lord, and the reason the Pharisees said they were so active in pursuing him was that the miraculous healing took place on a sabbath. And in that circumstance they found two infractions for which to reprove our divine Master according to their false traditions: first he made a kind of paste – mud – which according to their traditions was one of the forbidden servile works (on the Sabbath day); second, he cured a sick person.

15. *Iterum ergo interrogabant eum  
Pharisaei quomodo vidisset. Ille  
autem dixit eis: Lutum mihi  
posuit super oculos, et lavi, et video.*

15. *The Pharisees again asked him how  
he had received his sight. And he  
said to them, "He put clay on  
my eyes, and I washed, and I see."*

The Pharisees were torn between two opposed desires. On the one hand, they would have liked to maintain that there was a cure, in order to have the wherewithal to condemn before everyone him whom they had already condemned in their hearts without cause. On the other hand, they were quite afraid of the truth, since a great

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miracle would increase our Lord's reputation. These two opposed wishes greatly bothered them, as is evidenced by the way they questioned the cured blind man several times and generally handled the whole business.

16. *Dicebat ergo ex Pharisaeis quidam:  
Non est hic homo a Deo qui sabbatum  
non custodit. Alii autem dicebant:  
Quomodo potest homo peccator haec  
signa facere? Et schisma erat  
inter eos.*

16. *Some of the Pharisees said,  
"This man is not from God,  
for he does not keep the  
sabbath." But others said,  
"How can a man who is a  
sinner do such signs?" There  
was a division among them.*

Those who were passionately opposed to our Lord soon found a plausible reason to condemn him. They could neither deny nor explain the miracle, but it ran counter to and condemned their traditions, and by it they stood condemned by God. What did these impassioned people do? Leaving out of consideration the actual value of their traditions, they looked upon the infraction as something contrary to God's law and concluded that the said miracle could not come from God. 'This man is a sinner and acts this way inspired by sin; therefore he does not come from God'. They preferred to indulge in all these absurdities rather than disavow their ridiculous and quite recent traditions, because it was to their interest to sustain them, and their pride did not want to abandon these traditions by acknowledging the miracles God worked through his Son.

Others, who were more sensible, or rather less passionate, more open to receive God's grace and be faithful to it, made this serious objection: 'How can a sinner perform such great miracles?' They did not see the truth exactly, but they suspected and caught a glimpse of something extraordinary. They did not base themselves on this last miracle alone but they recalled all the others done by the divine Saviour. It is possible to deceive people once, but so many miracles, so public and so extraordinary, could not be frauds: 'these signs' they said.

We may presume that Nicodemus and Gamaliel were among the latter. Unable to harmonize it all with their traditions, they saw the finger of God; they were faithful to grace and followed the lights given them, however small. There are two sides to this event: one, by which a person is saved and attains the light of truth; the other, by which a person goes astray and is lost. Good well-disposed persons are affected by the right side, the true point of view from which the matter should be seen. Those who are badly disposed and carried away by their passions take the wrong side, to their loss. This is an example of what happens almost daily in the world with regard to divine things.

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| 17. <i>Dicunt ergo caeco iterum: Tu, quid dicis de illo qui aperuit oculos tuos? Ille autem dixit: Quia propheta est.</i> | 17. <i>So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."</i> |
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In this diversity of opinions and evident division among them, they addressed themselves to the blind man himself, hoping he would say something which would suit them. They hoped that fear would make him say, like them, that this man was a sinner. One thing certain is that they did not question the man in order to know the truth, for later on they cast him out of the synagogue for keeping to what he had said at the beginning. But the man's faith was not fruitless; full of gratitude towards his divine benefactor, he defended his cause, profiting by the light that came during his first steps in faith. He said fearlessly that the man was a prophet, although he realized he was speaking before the Saviour's greatest enemies, and although he had assisted at the debate between the two sides in which the wicked were doubtless in the majority.

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| 18. <i>Non crediderunt ergo Judaei illo, quia caecus fuisset et vidisset, donec vocaverunt parentes ejus qui viderat.</i> | 18. <i>The Jews did not believe that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight.</i> |
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The poor Pharisees, so full of malice and hatred towards our

Lord and therefore so very eager to undo the effect of the miracle, now did all in their power to fulfil their designs, seeking every means to avoid the truth of the miracle. They were greatly embarrassed. Although refusing to believe, they could not help admitting that the man had his sight through a miraculous intervention of our Lord. And here was the man best able to judge the miracle – because he rejoiced in being cured after having been blind from his birth – courageously telling them that he had been blind from birth and had been cured by this man who is called Jesus and this man called Jesus was a prophet; and he knew he was a prophet because he had cured him miraculously.

But these wretched people resisted all the graces our Lord offered, and they resisted to the end. Not knowing what to say, they accused the man of conniving with our Lord, they would not accept that he had been blind from birth. Blindness! They were blinder than the poor man had ever been! What did they gain by their questioning? Supposing even that he had not been blind all the time from birth, they could not possibly deny that he had been blind for some time and therefore that a clear miracle had taken place – a little mud formed of saliva and dust has never cured and will never cure a blind man. One could understand them making investigations about a fact like this reported by an unknown man. As for our Lord, who worked numerous miracles of the first order all the time, it would require the utmost malice to suspect that he was in connivance with the blind man to make him say he had been blind from birth and so make the miracle more impressive in the eyes of the people.

How absurd to maintain that a man who performs a miracle would harbour such sentiments in the very act that implies supernatural power! But passion and prejudice are capable of anything. They refused to believe the man and called his parents, hoping to learn from their lips that their son had not been blind, or even make them say something by which they could brand as deceit that deed which had its origin in the almighty power of God now crushing them.

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19. *Et interrogaverunt eos dicentes:  
Hic est filius vester, quem vos dicitis  
quia caecus natus est? Quomodo  
ergo nunc videt?*

19. *and asked them, "Is this your son,  
who you say was born blind?  
How then does he now see?"*

The Pharisees proposed three questions to the parents which they naturally had to ask during a judicial interrogation: 1. Is this your son? For only the parents can be the surest witnesses of that fact. 2. Was he born blind? This was the principal question. 3. How explain that he is cured? If they had proposed these three questions with good will, they would easily have found matter in the answer to change their attitude towards our divine Saviour. But the way they went about questioning the parents shows that they were not trying to discover the true facts but only wanting to frighten those they questioned and make them say what they wanted to hear. First of all, we see in the way they asked the questions that they were harsh and displeased. Secondly, instead of waiting for the answer to the first question, then the second and then the third, they proposed the three questions together, which made their aim clear. Thirdly, what a strange way to put the questions! 'You say that this man is your son and that he was born blind? How then does it happen that he sees?' They were really saying that they did not believe. 'How can that be true, for behold he sees and no one born blind can ever recover his sight?' It resembles more the questioning of a guilty person than the hearing of testimony. We must also note that they were dealing with persons who belonged to the lowest class, to beggars – people who are easily intimidated, as actually happened. Consequently if they had desired to find out the truth they should have proceeded with greater gentleness.

20. *Responderunt eis parentes ejus,  
et dixerunt: Scimus quia hic est filius  
noster, et quia caecus natus est.*  
21. *Quomodo autem nunc videat, nescimus;  
quis ejus aperuit oculos, nos nescimus:  
ipsum interrogate; aetatem habet, ipse de  
se loquatur.*

20. *His parents answered, "We  
know that this is our son, and  
that he was born blind;  
21. but how he now sees we do not  
know, nor do we know who  
opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of  
age, he will speak for himself."*

The parents answered clearly enough to convince the Pharisees about the reality of the great miracle. Although they did not dare to say how the cure had been accomplished, these poor people had sufficient fidelity not to yield too weakly to what the malicious Pharisees wanted. So they said courageously that he was truly their son and that he really had been blind from birth. The difficult question: 'how is it that he is now able to see?' they did not answer but referred the judges to their son, telling them to question himself. They had replied to the first two questions because their testimony was necessary. Their son could not have answered with certitude; he could have been born of other parents, and he could have lost his sight in early infancy, after enjoying vision for some time. But as to his cure, no one could better certify to that than he. Nevertheless, the parents knew the fact either because they had witnessed it or because their son had told them. If the question was asked with sincerity in order to get at the facts, they would have told the story as they knew it, but as they were afraid they might suffer harm they yielded to weakness and fear and preferred to tell a lie.

22. *Haec dixerunt parentes ejus, quoniam timebant Judaeos. Jam enim conspiraverant Judaei, ut si quis eum confiteretur esse Christum, extra synagogam fieret.*

22. *His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.*

23. *Propterea parentes ejus dixerunt quia aetatem habet, ipsum interrogate.*

23. *Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."*

The parents were afraid of being expelled from the synagogue. It was publicly known that all those who followed our divine Lord would be expelled from the synagogue, that is, excommunicated. By that fact they would be looked upon by all Jews with contempt and horror as outsiders to the people of God; they would be treated with the greatest severity in all circumstances, cut off and

abandoned by all. That, indeed, would be a great calamity for poor people, who probably lived on alms. And so the fear of seeming to follow Jesus is obvious in their answer. We see their great care to remove the least suspicion, and even to avoid being spoken to about our Lord. The Pharisees only asked them: 'Since you say he is your son and was born blind, how do you explain that he now sees?' Instead of simply answering the question: 'How is it that he now sees?' they added: 'We do not know how he recovered his sight, nor who he is who restored it to him'. These last words show clearly how eager they were to remove the least suspicion. Their great fear made them reject the interrogation about their son, so as to have done with it. The poor people had enough strength to avoid saying anything against the divine Saviour: they even said things in his favour as long as it did not incriminate them in the eyes of the Pharisees. They had confessed he was their son, and especially that he was born blind; however, because they were not wholly loyal and did not fully defend the truth they missed receiving great graces which their son had gained from the warmth of his answers.

That often happens in this world. Persons with little courage and weak faith lose much because of their weakness; they are afraid of being deprived of earthly goods. On the contrary, fervent souls who walk vigorously in the ways of divine grace, who do not worry about losses they could suffer on earth through fidelity to their God, and who have the generosity of a faith that is full of fervour and love – these souls are rewarded a hundredfold for what they lose in earthly goods. Spiritual blessings increase so abundantly as to be a source of amazement. This is what happened to our blind man.

24. *Vocaverunt ergo rursum hominem,  
qui fuerat caecus, et dixerunt ei:  
Da gloriam Deo; nos scimus quia hic  
homo peccator est.*

24. *So for the second time they called  
the man who had been blind, and  
said to him, "Give God praise;  
we know that this man is a sinner."*



The Pharisees, more and more embarrassed as they progressed in their interrogation, now had recourse once more to the blind man who had been healed. They refrained from questioning the parents any further because they knew well what the parents were thinking and they were afraid of testimony against themselves. That is why, when they saw they had succeeded in intimidating the parents and would get no more out of them, they came back to the son to gain a point over him and at least weaken the miracle by the admission they hoped to get. In their way of questioning they used consummate malice. They saw the poor man full of great spiritual joy, full of gratitude to God for the grace he had just received. So they tried to make use even of his good dispositions to seduce him with satanic malice, still remaining incredulous about the miracle, the reality of which was becoming ever more evident. They proposed the motives of God's glory. 'Render glory to God', they said, 'we know that this man is a sinner'. That meant: 'Do not keep saying that you were born blind and he cured you miraculously, but tell us what actually happened'.

25. *Dixit ergo eis ille: Si peccator est, nescio; unum scio, quia caecus cum essem, nunc video.*

25. *He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see."*

The man cured of blindness probably did not let them complete their question, for it seems to be only half expressed. As soon as he heard them say that his benefactor was a sinner it hurt him and he rushed to defend his honour against his enemies. So he said: 'As regards the question of knowing whether that man is a sinner or not, I have nothing to say, I do not know'. The phrase 'I do not know', in his mouth does not mean that he has any doubt about it, for we will see what his opinion was; he merely wanted to say that this was not the question and that he did not need to give an answer because on the matter in question he could not know it directly but only by induction, as he would explain later on and as

he now implied. 'I do not know directly whether he is a sinner or not, but I do know for certain that I was blind and now I see'. There we have a striking way of replying to the insidious malice of the Pharisees, which the cured man was well aware of and vigorously and courageously rejected; he even showed a certain indignation throughout the interrogation.

26. *Dixerunt ergo illi: quid fecit tibi?  
Quomodo aperuit tibi oculos?*

26. *They said to him, "What did he do  
to you?" "How did he open your  
eyes?"*

The Pharisees did not give up yet. They made new efforts and put him the same questions he had already answered. This they did either because they hoped he might contradict himself in his new answers or because they wanted to discover new circumstances in which to find new difficulties. At present they had no real doubt about the miracle nor did they find any difficulty except the alleged infraction of the Sabbath, about which they had made so much fuss.

27. *Respondit eis: Dixi vobis jam, et  
audistis; quid iterum vultis audire?  
Numquid et vos vultis discipuli  
ejus fieri?*

27. *He answered them, "I have  
told you already and you would  
not listen. Why do you want to  
hear it again? Do you too want to  
become his disciples?"*

The cured blind man saw all the intricacies in the Pharisees' questions about the miracle. They had just said that the one who performed it was a sinner; after that they had asked how the miracle had taken place, as if they wanted to find out in good faith. He asked if their request was inspired by a genuine desire to get at the truth and become disciples of the Saviour: 'Do you also desire to become his disciples since you are so eager to listen again to all the circumstances of the miraculous happening?' It may also be that this man, who had been blind from birth and had just recovered his sight, could not read faces and so could not guess the purpose of the Pharisees questions.

He may have been impressed by the gentle tone they affected the better to seduce him to explain the details. He may also have seriously believed the Pharisees had changed their minds and now wanted to become Jesus' disciples like himself. This thought was the more likely because of his own profound respect for our Lord and his ardent desire to be his disciple, as so many others were. It may have seemed quite natural that everybody would share his sentiments.

However he seemed astonished by it: 'You too you who were always so much against him?' It is clear that he was filled with grateful love for his benefactor and did not fear to show himself his disciple, at the risk of becoming to the Jews the divine Saviour's greatest enemies.

28. *Maledixerunt ergo ei, et dixerunt: Tu Discipulus ejus sis; nos autem Moysi discipuli sumus.* 28. *And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses."*

The suggestion 'Do you also wish to become his disciples?' deeply hurt the Pharisees' pride. They saw themselves placed below the one whom they wished to tread underfoot. They to be called disciples of Jesus Christ? It horrified their pride. All of a sudden their feigned gentleness disappeared and violent anger took its place. They cursed the one who dared to entertain that thought. But the curse of wicked people is true happiness for souls blest by the Master of heaven and earth, by him in whom alone dwells all the blessing of God to be given to creatures: 'Blessed are you when they curse you for my name's sake' (cf Mt 5:11).

Moreover the curse recoils on those who utter it, according to the promise made to Abraham, but referring to the Messiah: 'I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you will be cursed' (Gen 12:3) They said to the man: 'You can be one of his disciples; as for us, we are disciples of Moses'. In these words they exhibited a greater contempt for the divine Messiah than Esau had shown for him when he despised his birthright (cf Gen 24:35).



Esau's curse would also light on those proud heads. They were disciples of Moses! That was a lie. They were only disciples of their pride, they were disciples of the lie and its father the devil. If they were truly Moses' disciples they would of necessity be our Lord's. For, while the Messiah, the Son of God, lived on earth, and from that time on, it is not possible to be a disciple of Moses except by abandoning him and placing oneself under the laws of the divine Messiah and becoming his disciple. Moses' whole teaching says that and that alone. All that Moses said and did was a figure of the Messiah to come, to prepare the Jewish people for his coming. Therefore the image made it clear that it was to give way to the reality once the reality appeared. All his disciples were to be enlightened by the Messiah of truth and reality.

29. *Nos scimus quia Moysi locutus est Deus; hunc autem nescimus unde sit.*

29. *We know that God has spoken to Moses but as for this man, we do know where he comes from."*

A fine reason they give for their hardening unbelief! They do not want to be Jesus' disciples and they curse those who suspect them of having the slightest leaning towards him, for they know for sure that God had spoken to Moses; but as for this other they do not know where he is from, that is, by what spirit he acts. Into what erroneous judgments can passion drive someone! They knew God spoke through Moses, and why are they so sure? Because their ancestors have recorded a great number of miracles worked by this great servant of God, miracles for the most part of judgment and fear obtained through the intercessory prayer of that servant to his Master. There is no doubt they are solid proof of his mission.

But in Jesus, the living and omnipotent Son of God, they see with their own eyes countless miracles, not of fear but of generosity and love, not worked in virtue of prayer but by his own power with a single word, like the divine power in creation. And they say that they do not know this man! There was at least

enough evidence to know that he was sent as much as Moses was. They fall into a vicious circle through their unruly passions and pride. They accepted Moses' mission as divine on the basis of his miracles, and they refuse to accept Jesus' miracles, as evident and great as those of Moses, because they did not know his divine mission! True miracles therefore cannot be known except by the certainty of a divine mission; and the certainty of the divine mission can only be known through miracles! How does one get out of this circle and know God through those whom he has sent?

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| 30. <i>Respondit ille homo, et dixit eis: in hoc enim mirabile est quia vos nescitis unde sit, et aperuit oculos meos.</i> | 30. <i>The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.</i>                |
| 31. <i>Scimus autem quia peccatores Deus non audit; sed si quis Dei cultor est et voluntatem ejus facit, hunc exaudit.</i> | 31. <i>We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him.</i> |
| 32. <i>A saeculo non est auditum quia quis aperuit oculos caeci nati.</i>  | 32. <i>Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.</i>                           |
| 33. <i>Nisi esset hic a Deo, non poterat facere quidquam.</i>  | 33. <i>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."</i>   |

This answer is a continuation of what the man had replied already, since he says 'for'; he is elaborating. The Pharisees had said: 'this man is a sinner'. He had replied: 'Yet the man whom you call a sinner has opened my eyes'. In their reply the Pharisees said they did not know this man (that is, our Lord). To this the blind man who had been healed replied that this should astonish anyone. The Pharisees, who were doctors of the law and learned men in that science, did not know Jesus in spite of the certain fact that he had opened the blind man's eyes. This simple and uneducated man reasoned so forcefully that he

overwhelmed those incredulous scholars. A lively, vigorous faith in a simple soul gives infinitely more light than the obscure darkness of the most enlightened human reason. The once blind man says to them: 'You do not want to be his disciples because you do not know his mission. It is very surprising, though, that you do not know whether he comes from God. It is certain that he opened my eyes.

'Now, on the one hand, it is certain that no one born blind has ever been cured by mere human means, so he must have used supernatural means. It is God who granted me my cure (for he still believed that Jesus was only a prophet; but he sensed that his cure had come only from God). On the other hand, we all know for certain that God does not grant sinners the supernatural grace to work such miracles; he hears only those who serve him faithfully. Therefore it is perfectly clear that this man came from God. Otherwise it would have been impossible for him to cure me or perform anything supernatural'.

What a privilege for him to be the first person chosen to defend and confess our Lord before these faithless unbelieving judges! And our divine Master showed here, in advance, that he would sustain those who confess him before the princes of the earth, and that his servants had no need to prepare what to say, that he would inspire them at such moments. For it is certain that he was inspiring this uneducated man to speak clearly and forcefully reduce to silence those who were well practised in chicanery.

34. *Responderunt et dixerunt ei: In peccatis natus es totus, et tu doces nos? Et ejecerunt eum foras.*

34. *They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.*

The Pharisees, seeing they were left speechless by a poor ignorant fellow, then said something for which he had no answer. They were invested with power and here before them stood a weak defenceless man. They resorted to insult and violence as the proud usually do. They began by insulting him, saying he was



wholly born in sin. These poor people shared the crass opinion of the apostles, concluding that since he was born blind he was born in sin. It did not strike the miserable creatures that even if he was born in sin he had gloriously and advantageously come out of it through a miracle worked in his favour. At that moment he was free of his sinfulness, while his accusers, vile sinners, instead of getting out of their sinful condition were becoming more and more hardened and steeped in it. Besides, they showed by their words that they did indeed believe he was born blind and, if they believed that, they should have concluded that the miracle was great and perfect. But proud and passionate souls are incapable of such conclusions; they are blind to all good.

They said: 'You were born in sin and you want to teach us!' It is here that their pride and haughtiness showed. The man had spoken so clearly that they had no reply. They were aware of the full force of his reasons, but two things prevented them from accepting them. Firstly, they were determined to bring about our Lord's death and would not renege on that. Secondly, their pride would never let them be beaten in an argument by a miserable uneducated person. They preferred to stop their ears and harden their minds and hearts. He was born in sin and he wants to instruct them! But what has this sinful condition to do with the truth spoken by his lips? Truth must always be welcomed. But the blind Pharisees found it a plausible reason to cast him out.

O Divine Jesus! how blessed this man was to have been treated like that by your enemies, for the love of you! The Pharisees' door was now closed to him, but he need not be pitied. On the contrary his happiness was infinitely greater, for thus he found the door of your adorable heart open. And there you revived him with wonderful kindness. It is much better to be received by you than to belong to the Pharisees. Open to me also the door of your heart, most lovable and adorable Lord Jesus. Let me enter there and enjoy the fullness of your divine light and most holy love!

35. *Audivit Jesus quia ejecerunt  
eum foras; et cum invenisset eum ,  
dixit ei: Tu credis in Filium Dei?*

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him  
out, and having found him he said,  
"Do you believe in the Son of  
man?"*

Jesus learned that the Pharisees had cast him out. The divine Saviour had no need to be told about it by others – he had seen and assisted the man throughout the struggle and was present in all that happened. But the gospel wants to show us that our Lord's ear is attentive to all the insults his servants undergo for love of him. After assisting us in our warfare and giving us the strength to bear the pains that the devil and the world cause us to suffer out of hatred for him, even after giving us great interior satisfaction, he is ready to receive us and listen with sympathetic understanding to the details of our struggles; he comes to console us and grant us an abundance of his grace. The evangelist does not say: 'hearing' or 'when he heard and found out', but uses a separate phrase: he heard, to teach a consoling truth to those who suffer persecution for wanting to belong to our Lord.

The rest of the verse is a development of this first word. So the evangelist adds: 'and when he had found him'. Jesus heard of the persecution he had suffered. The evangelist does not say he heard the man had been faithful in defending his faith, but that he had been cast out, because this was the object of Jesus' particular attention.

What did he do next? He went to find him in order to reward him, which is his usual way of doing things. He listens and then comes to give us the hundredfold he promised. There is no doubt that our Lord went to find him, for it was not by chance that he happened to meet him nor as a result of ordinary providence. If chance could exist for everyone (a thing that is impossible), it could not exist for our Lord because, knowing everything and ruling all his movements with a clear view of the divine will for us all, he could not act except through choice and an act of mind and will. For the same reason he did not fall under ordinary

providence, for ordinary providence, governing all people, makes use of their actions and of all circumstances to bring things to where the divine will wants them, and this independently of people and without their knowing it.

But it was not so for our divine Master. His Father's divine providence brought people and circumstances to him so that he might act upon them and in them according to his Father's determined will. But as for Jesus himself, seeing beforehand the whole sequence of his Father's divine providence and the development of his will, he acted always in harmony with his Father's providence and will, by a conscious act of his mind in union with the divine action of the Word. This means that our Lord directed his steps so as to meet the poor man, who had been driven from the council and synagogue, and to do and say to him what his Father wished.

Having found him he said: 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' As the man had just been battling for his faith, which was thus already full of merit, our Lord wanted to give him further enlightenment, finally establishing him in strong and perfect faith. This is always our Lord's procedure. He first gives us a dim faith; he communicates great graces; and when we are faithful he gives more clarity and strengthens our faith accordingly. He strengthens us by prompting us to further acts of faith. That is why our Lord gave the man an understanding of his divine person, by means of a question. It was to make him produce an act of faith, which he did most fervently.

At the same time as our Lord put this luminous question to him he was giving an interior prompting of grace, which in fact made the man do more than our Lord's words asked for or rather it made him, using all his faculties, act on the sentiments which necessarily accompany a living ardent faith. So great is our Lord's goodness and grace for faithful souls and so powerful is his divine word! The turn of phrase, 'You believe', is in contrast to the unbelieving Pharisees but in line with the fidelity with which the man defended his faith.

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36. *Respondit ille, et dixit: Quis est, Domine, ut credam in eum?*

36. *He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"*

The words of this man so dedicated and full of faith show that if he had not the full light of a perfect faith it was only because the grace was still wanting which the divine mercy had wonderfully prepared him to receive. Our Lord asked him if he believed in the Son of God, and the poor man was immediately ready to believe but did not know him. Divine grace had touched him, his soul fully abandoned itself into the hands of his Saviour, he now needed only a word from his mouth in order to adore the Son of God, whom Jesus would graciously reveal to him: 'Who is he that I may believe in him?' He asked impatiently where the Son of God was and he seemed to plead with our Lord to reveal him, so that knowing him he could then adore him. He awaits this new grace from the Lord's goodness. A person disposed like that is always heard when he makes similar requests.

37. *Et dixit ei Jesus: Et vidisti eum, et qui loquitur tecum ipse est.*

37. *Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you."*

Our Lord, seeing him so well disposed, his heart open and ready to receive his divine word, revealed himself to him and gave him full knowledge of his divinity. There is a great lesson for us in all this. To all those whom our Lord attracts to himself he gives at first a faith that is not completely enlightened. At the beginning our Lord demands obedience to the divine word of grace he speaks to us without our understanding it; we thereby prepare ourselves to advance further. After that we must show greater docility, still not understanding or at least not understanding clearly. The more we progress the more we will see. People who are self-opinionated and afraid to surrender will not attain the perfect docility of the man born blind. (This can happen through self-love, fear of making oneself looked down on or at least not highly esteemed, or for other similar reasons of self-love). They do not know sufficiently that they are born blind and that their mind

is only darkness. And so they do not attain to this docility nor acquire the great interior light that constitutes the happiness of perfect souls, filling them with heavenly brightness.

But those who from the start renounce their own ideas, who are glad to be cured by our Lord and abandon themselves wholly and unreservedly into his hands, receive great and plentiful graces. Their faith is obscure at first, like the others, but their minds will be disposed like the blind man's, they will only wait for a word uttered by their liberator and Master to throw themselves unreservedly into his hands. Further, our Lord suddenly changes the face of things: their faith becomes luminous and from the lips of their adorable Master they hear divine instructions to answer their every question. Normally this will happen after bearing crosses courageously and lovingly.

To let the man know that he was the Son of God, our Lord did not simply say: 'I am', or 'It is I who am talking to you'. But he had recourse to a special turn of phrase: 'and you have seen him'. Our Lord wanted to show him the greatest grace he received at his cure, namely, that one of the first things he saw was the Son of God, and furthermore that this was the purpose of his cure. For such is God's goodness! He gives us a first grace in order to give us a second one much greater; he gives us the immense worth of his grace in this world in order to give us afterwards the infinite worth of his glory.

'And you have seen him' also means, you have seen with your mind and your faith, for bodily vision without faith is worthless. He saw the Son of God according to faith, although not recognising him for who he was. He saw him without being aware of what he saw; he saw something divine. This he showed by all he did and said.

'And the one who is speaking to you, this is he'. Our Lord let him know that everything he felt in his soul came from him who was the Son of God: 'and who is speaking to you'. Our Lord, the Son of God, was speaking to him. His ears were struck by the sound of the words uttered by the Son of man but the words were

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words of the Son of God; they penetrated even to the division of his soul (cf Heb 4:12) to penetrate and fill his heart. It is certain that if our Lord had already given him great graces, then at this moment he must have given him even greater ones to prepare him directly to receive the knowledge and light of his divinity.

These words also express something else: the twofold action of our Lord in souls whom he takes and attracts to himself. The first consists in drawing their mind so that they will contemplate him and submit to him; this is the relationship of the soul with our Lord: 'And you have seen him'. The second is the communication of our Lord to the heart to imprint his word and love in it, to instruct and animate it; this is the relationship of our Lord with the soul: 'and he is the very one who is speaking to you'. It is one and the same who makes us see and speaks to our heart; even when we make a move to contemplate him and give ourselves to him, it is he who works that grace in us.

38. *At ille ait: Credo, Domine.  
Et procidens adoravit (eum).*

38. *He said, "Lord, I believe";  
and he worshipped him.*

This answer of the healed blind man is perfectly related to the two statements of our Lord. To the words 'and you have seen him', he answers: 'I believe, Lord'. And to the words: 'and who is speaking to you', he prostrates himself and adores. This is admirable faith, faith which does not reason. It sees, it hears, it adores. No reflection, but total surrender: 'I believe, Lord'. Our Lord asked him: 'Do you believe?' and he answered: 'I believe, Lord', and his action followed suit. Not only did he submit his mind but he gave all the powers of his body: 'prostrating himself', and of his soul: 'he adored him'. He saw by faith and adored by the wonderful grace our Lord gave him by his divine word. He adored and thereby gave homage to the divinity and professed that all the powers of his body and soul were under the dominion of the Son of God and that he received everything from him in the order of nature and grace: 'And prostrating himself, he adored'.



39. *Et dixit Jesus: In iudicium ego  
in hunc mundum veni; ut qui non  
vident, videant, et qui vident  
caeci fiant.*

39. *Jesus said, "For judgment I came  
into this world that those who do  
not see may see, and that those who  
see may become blind."*

Our Lord uses the occasion as a parable. He connects and makes a comparison between the man's blindness and the darkness of his mind, between the sight he has received and the grace of faith which resulted from it. One is only an image of the other, and he applies it to other people. He says, therefore, that he has come into the world for judgment. The word judgment contains what Simeon foretold at the Presentation of the divine Saviour, when he said: 'This child shall be the ruin and the salvation of many in Israel'. Our Lord came to be a subject of judgment between the good and the bad. Some will be faithful and saved; others will be unfaithful and lost.

The judgment consists in this, that those who do not see attain to clear vision, as the story of the man born blind indicates. They see him who was at the same time both image and reality of the truth our divine Saviour enunciates. On the other hand those who see become blind. Before our Saviour's coming all insights were in the hands of the doctors of the law, and all who benefited from their small feeble light were in a good position: the others were blind. Those lights were only a glimmer, but when everybody is blind he who has a small glimmer of light is looked upon as clearsighted.

Our Lord, on coming into the world, came only to spread the great splendour of his truth. Those who were in darkness, that is, the simple uninstructed people, saw this great light to be in accordance with the word of the prophet (Is. 9:2); they flocked to it in great numbers and believed, and became enlightened through faith. (If this did not happen immediately for all, it took place at least after the Ascension.) But those who previously possessed the small glimmer of light, believing that they were clearsighted, did

not yield to but rather withstood the great light for fear of being dazzled by the light that had come. Now, since the glimmer they had was only a reflection of the great divine light, by rejecting that light they lost even the glimmer, as the moon by turning away from the sun loses the little it had and becomes dark. Our Lord thus predicted both the conversion of the Gentiles, who had been children of darkness from the beginning of the world and have received the light of our divine sun, and the hardening of the Jewish people, who, alone had possession of the light, lost it and became a people of darkness.

40. *Et audierunt quidam ex Phariseis  
qui cum ipso erant, et dixerunt ei:  
Numquid et nos caeci sumus?*

40. *Some of the Pharisees near him  
heard this, and they said to him,  
"Are we also blind?"*

Some Pharisees happened to be with our Lord, for these people never left him; some always remained with him, not in order to profit by his discourse but to spy on him at all times and scrutinize all his words and conduct, in order to find something to take exception to; they never missed an opportunity of opposing him and their pride was obvious on all these occasions.

Those there present felt at once that his words might concern them, for they felt guilty. That is why they questioned him and asked whether they too were blind. They had such a good opinion of themselves that they scarcely believed it possible they could be called blind. But in fact they were so blind that they could not see that their good opinion of themselves was itself the source of their blindness.

The Pharisees understood that our Lord was speaking of those who refused to believe in him, those who had cast out the man born blind, who was now clearsighted. They felt the comparison weighing on them, so they asked the question with a kind of surprise: 'Do you believe then that we Pharisees are blind?' They implied by this that they had the light of the law, of the prophets and of tradition.

41. *Dixit eis Jesus: Si caeci essetis non haberetis peccatum; nunc vero dicitis: Quia videmus; peccatum vestrum manet.*

41. *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.*

Our Lord had not said that they were blind but that by resisting and opposing the divine light they were becoming blind. So he replied that if they were truly blind, as the man who was cured had been, they would not have the sin of resisting him; for then they would be resisting for the glory of God and in all sincerity and not as a result of their evil passions, not knowing they were resisting the light. But, he added, now that you say you see the truth, and you resist nevertheless, your sin will remain in you and you will be truly blind. Our Lord said: 'you say that you see', because, fundamentally, they had no true light, but only the remains of a glimmer they found in the law and the prophets; for their false traditions had not overturned anything but only obscured things. There remained to them even some true traditions that still taught them much concerning the eternal Truth which was to appear on earth.

That does not mean that they lived in bright daylight, but only enjoyed a strong glimmer of light, which, however, was greatly obscured by their passion and false traditions. But there was enough light to let them recognise the truth and to make their malicious resistance inexcusable. That is why their sin remained and produced the blindness of which our divine Master spoke. But the blindness was not to be total until he who had come to save and enlighten them died. Those who believed, through the enduring practice of the faith, acquired the light as their inheritance; those who remained incredulous became confirmed in sin, were hardened in it and fell into total blindness. That explains why our Lord said: 'Your sin remains'.



## CHAPTER TEN

### The Good Shepherd

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| 1. <i>Amen, amen, dico vobis: Qui non intrat per ostium in ovile ovium, sed ascendit aliunde, ille fur est et latro.</i> | 1. <i>"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.</i> |
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In the light of the Pharisees' behaviour our Lord gave this fine instruction to the shepherds of his Church, that is to say, pastors of souls. He addressed the parable to the Pharisees, who were the shepherds of the Jewish people. He compared the assembly of faithful souls to a sheepfold. He spoke in a general way, indicating either the faithful of the Old Testament or those of the New, so it concerns the priests of the New Testament as well as the doctors and heads of the people of the Old Testament.

By the entrance into the sheepfold our Lord did not mean only the initial taking charge, which needs a divine vocation, for he reproached the Pharisees in this passage for being thieves and brigands. Now the Pharisees were not thieves for want of vocation; they occupied the chair of Moses, as our Lord says in another gospel, and that through lawful succession. Our Lord had in mind every action of a pastor by which he governs and directs the faithful. This orientation towards the faithful to govern and guide them is called the entrance into the sheepfold, because in order to govern and direct as a true pastor, one has to enter spiritually into souls. Hearts must be open to the shepherd, who, after entering, must govern and direct them.

There are two entrances to the sheepfold: one is lawful and according to the nature of a sheepfold; the other is unlawful and contrary to the order of things. The lawful, natural entrance is called a door; every other entrance is unlawful and unnatural. The shepherd enters by the door, because the doorkeeper who is in charge opens it for him. The stranger who comes to steal cannot enter by the door, because the doorkeeper will not open it for him.

So what does he do? He uses violence or ruse to force another entrance into the sheepfold. Therefore any other entrance except the door is a thieves' entrance.

Now in order to know and find the lawful door one must examine the nature of the sheepfold and of the sheep enclosed therein. Only the genuine shepherd can enter, or someone in his name and with him, for no stranger can enter as shepherd. So for the present let us examine the sheepfold. It is a totally spiritual, supernatural sheepfold; the sheep are souls considered as living in a spiritual and supernatural condition. Therefore the way to enter into the sheepfold must also be spiritual and supernatural. Now in order to enter in a supernatural way into that spiritual and supernatural sheepfold, there is and can be only one door, which is our Lord alone!

A person dealing with his own salvation and not in charge of souls is a simple sheep who has entered through the divine door into the way of salvation and into the sheepfold of the eternal Father, for nothing can enter except through the divine door which the Father has given us. But he who is not only concerned with his own salvation but also with the salvation of his neighbour is a pastor, inasmuch as he has sheep under his care. Every time that, other than being occupied with himself, he deals with the sheep in pastoral functions of governing and guiding, he enters into the sheepfold; and he can only do this lawfully when he does it in our Lord, who is the only supernatural entrance, the sole means of performing supernatural works.

Hence a pastor who wants to enter by the true door, that is through our Lord, in all his relations with souls in directing and guiding them must enter into the supernatural vision of faith and do his work through faith animated by grace. He who does pastoral work according to merely human, natural views and through actions that are purely human and natural does not enter by the door but by one of the other entrances, even if he was legitimately called to the pastorate. These entrances vary according to the different passions that guide one and the more or

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less culpable activity involved. In such a case each pastoral action is carried out not to govern and keep the sheep but for the pastor's own glory and advantage. For every time a pastor has purely natural views and activities he is acting for himself. Now, since he has no right to draw profit from the sheep entrusted to him, it follows that he is a thief and a brigand.

Our Lord uses these two terms, one of which means to steal in secret and by trickery, the other by force and openly, because all bad shepherds use these two ways of stealing. The Pharisees constantly used both ways, as they showed in the affair of the poor man born blind. They used ruse and force to rule and guide and direct, and both were illegitimate means in their hands, because they used them illegitimately; they did not enter by the door. They were thieves and brigands who desired to enter into souls through ruse and force, because they were unable to enter by the lawful door. They wanted to act upon their own independently of our Lord, who is the only door; they wanted to act upon them for their own interest and glory.

2. *Qui autem intrat per ostium,  
pastor est ovium.*

2. *but he who enters by the  
door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

In verse one we saw in what way our Lord is the door. In order to understand what follows, these two great truths must be known. First, there is only one sheepfold, which is the assembly of the children of God, and one only Shepherd, namely, our Lord. Secondly, all those who are charged with guiding the sheep, who act only in his name and in union with him, under his eye and in his power, become as it were one and the same person with this great shepherd, so that their pastoral action is done in him, the sovereign Shepherd, directing, feeding and governing souls. That is why their pastoral work is attributed to the great Shepherd, to whom it belongs; it is attributed to them in the sense that they have his power and act in virtue of this pastoral power of the great Shepherd.



And so those who do not enter by the door or do not come through our Lord or act in our Lord, are thieves and brigands, for they grab for themselves profits realized from sheep, which belong exclusively to the great Shepherd. They are not shepherds, for this they could be only through his power and operating through his action. Those, on the contrary, who enter through the divine door, which is given to them for that purpose, are true shepherds, as we have said.

When our Lord says 'he is the Shepherd of the sheep', he is only saying he himself is the shepherd and the one who enters through him is also a true Shepherd in and through him; in fact our Lord exercises his pastoral function by means one of the one who enters through him and exercises pastoral activity by means of him. That is why, in the following verse, when speaking of the shepherd who enters through him, he speaks of his own person and shows what he is in relation to the sheep, which are his property, and how he deals with them. Everything he says is said about the real world, not only what the adorable Shepherd does by himself, but also what he does through those who enter the sheepfold through him. Therefore everything he says about himself happens also to them, with this exception. All their activity is outside themselves in its source and goal, and in great part even as regards the manner or ways it takes place; these belong to the sovereign and unique Shepherd. Otherwise they would not be entering through him and would be thieves, because the sheep do not belong to them but to the sovereign Shepherd, whose property they are, 'his own sheep'.

This existence of the sovereign Shepherd in those who come and enter through him into the sheepfold is not something new, nor is the union they enjoy with him new. This truth is taught in a multitude of places in the New Testament. The Son of God became incarnate to make us share in his divine nature. 'Sharers' says St Peter (2 Ptr 1:4); St Paul says: 'I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20). And he speaks not only of himself but of every Christian, thinking of the outpouring of the Spirit of Jesus to establish his life in us. St Paul repeats this truth in a multitude of

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places and our Lord often speaks of it.

Our divine Master established a definite number of sacraments as so many channels through which he passes on his own life to us, in order that in every moment of life Jesus may live in us according to that circumstance. Moreover, he has established his adorable Sacrament by which he unites himself to our souls and becomes one substance with them. Because of this the ordinary Christian lives the intimate life of Jesus as Jesus lives it with the Father. The priest, who is truly a shepherd in Jesus Christ, has within himself, not only Jesus' intimate life, but also his pastoral care for his sheep.

It is a fact, therefore, that everything our Lord will say about himself must be said of the shepherds who enter through the true door; otherwise one might conclude from his discourse that every shepherd other than he is not a true shepherd but a thief. This is not so. All those who truly enter through the door, as we said above, are true shepherds. But it is Jesus who is Shepherd in them, and it is to him the sheep belong, and these shepherds must not act in their own name or draw profit for themselves.

3. *Huic ostiarius aperit, et oves  
vocem ejus audiunt, et proprias  
oves vocat nominatim, et educit eas.*

3. *To him the gatekeeper opens;  
the sheep hear his voice, and  
he calls his own sheep by  
name and leads them out.*

The spiritual sheepfold of souls belonging to God is closed and it is impossible to enter into it supernaturally except through our Lord, who is the door of souls. But we cannot open this divine door by ourselves; his divine Spirit is the doorkeeper, it is he who lets souls enter through the door. It is up to those who represent the divine Shepherd to turn to our Lord and through our Lord every time they want to deal pastorally with souls; then the Holy Spirit will open people's hearts to them so that they may enter and have excellent dealings with their flock. But the divine Spirit opens to them only when he sees our Lord in them, both in their

entrance and in their actions; for it is only the sovereign Shepherd to whom the sheep belong who can enter and be received there.

This goes to show the great purity shepherds of souls should have in their pastoral works, how great their faith ought to be, the soul of all their works; it must be shorn of all self-love and personal interest. 'And the sheep hear his voice'. In instructing people about divine things for God's glory and the salvation of souls, there is only one voice that can make itself heard, namely, the voice of the great Shepherd, for no human voice, however powerful, can bring people to understand eternal truths in a way that arouses sentiments of faith and love. But as soon as they hear our Lord's voice, all souls that are truly sheep, that is, who have God's grace and are well disposed, become immediately docile and submissive; they receive and listen to the voice touching and drawing them. It follows that if a shepherd wants to speak to souls and make them docile to grace, he must be filled with the Spirit of our Lord and speak in this divine Spirit of his Master. And good souls will hear that voice which they know well, will turn to it and readily let themselves be ruled and directed by it.

'He calls his own sheep by name'. The voice of the divine Shepherd, speaking through the mouth of his priests, calls his sheep. Our Lord calls them to himself as belonging to him, as his property; he takes them and wins them over. How great is the happiness of true sheep to have true shepherds, in whom dwells their great and only Shepherd! These shepherds speak their master's language and this divine Master speaks to them, touching them and calling them to himself.

'By name': only the divine Shepherd can call each sheep by its name! He gives this grace to true shepherds who act and speak in his name and by his power. The name of an object or person expresses the nature of the object and the kind of person they are. We are speaking here of a spiritual object and of a supernatural state of life. This supernatural state of life can take several different forms, because the ways of God vary so considerably as do his plans for them, as well as the course of grace and their own

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state of mind and heart, that it is impossible for anyone to know by himself alone the interior condition of a soul or the course it should follow. It is impossible for any single person to call each sheep by its name; this means to discern its pattern of life and activity and to speak to it and guide it according to its own style of life. Our Lord is the source of all those graces; he knows intimately all that is taking place in each one; he calls them with a boundless love and goodness, each one by its name, according to its own inner being.

‘And he leads them out’: The divine Shepherd thus calls each sheep by its name, according to its own condition and inner attraction, according to which his divine voice touches it. And he leads that sheep out, that is he makes it produce good works, according to the divine will for each, according to each one’s name, that is, according to each one’s spiritual attraction, condition and dispositions.

One remains in the sheepfold when one remains present to oneself with the dispositions and life of one’s divine Shepherd. One’s soul goes out, under the guidance of one’s Shepherd, when, as a consequence of these interior dispositions and the life of Jesus, one acts publicly activating the life of Jesus that dwells within. Now it is only the divine Shepherd who can thus call each sheep by its name, because the divine life of the adorable Shepherd is diversified in the sheep and makes them act each according to its name, that is, according to the diversity of the Shepherd’s life in each.

In his wonderful goodness the divine Shepherd communicates his life and pastoral spirit to those who act in his name, through his power and through his divine Spirit, so much so that Jesus through his priests, accomplishes those same things which he accomplishes by himself. And thus the priest who is filled in a holy way with this pastoral energy and the Spirit which is its origin, acts only through him and in him. He knows – through supernatural power – the condition of souls, calls them by their name and helps them act according to God’s plans and according

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to the true attraction of Our Lord within them. Thus he enables them advance more in a month than they would have done in years.

4. *Et cum proprias oves emisericit,  
ante eas vadit: et oves illum sequuntur,  
quoniam sciunt vocem ejus.*

4. *When he has brought out all his  
own, he goes before them, and  
the sheep follow him, for they  
know his voice.*

'He brought them out' means more than 'he led them out'. 'To lead out' is simply to give the first impetus for an action which they produce independently by the interior life of Jesus in their souls. In verse 4, 'he brought them out' means: he takes them out far and follows their movement. So there is a sustained impulse to continued action. Our Lord says once again 'his own sheep', to keep making clear what Shepherd he means, who the Shepherd is who makes the sheep go out far. No one but the Master of the sheepfold can get the people belonging to him to become active, either to find their food or to work for his glory. He also says 'his own sheep', not only thinking of his pastoral power, which alone can make them leave the sheepfold, but also thinking of the sheep, who must always, in their going out, follow him to whom they belong. Believers in their activities must relate in everything to their only Shepherd and Master, as the next words explain.

'Walks before them'. The shepherd walks before the flock and all eyes of the flock are on him. He draws the sheep by his words and signs and the flock follows him. Likewise our Lord, the sovereign Shepherd, when he makes his sheep go out, walks before them, draws them towards himself in all their works by means of that interior attraction which enables them to persevere in their activity. He begins by making them go out and giving them the wish to do the works he assigns them. He goes before them by constantly attracting them to continue their course of action. And when he acts upon them through his true shepherds, these shepherds, acting by his power and Spirit, always help them follow the attraction of the great Shepherd.

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One could explain the words, 'And he walks before them', in another true sense. In all the virtues and perfections he enables his sheep to practise, he goes before them, and their eyes must be trained on their Shepherd in order to follow him. And so in everything we do we have our Shepherd walking before our eyes, a divine model of the way of holiness and perfection, the way he has opened up for us to follow. All true shepherds must represent the great Shepherd and give the same example to their sheep. Not that they must do all they invite the sheep to do, but their actions should be animated by the same virtues and perfection. 'And the sheep follow him': the sheep follow him in everything they do. True sheep respond to the shepherd's appeal and no other as not reason nor taste nor anything else but the grace of their Shepherd preceding them, draws them; they 'hear' his grace, his interior voice, and imitate his divine example.

'Because they know his voice'. The reason they follow him is that they know his voice. He calls them and attracts them, walking before them, and they follow him because they know his voice. Believers interiorly perceive the divine shepherd's voice when they are true sheep, because they are in the habit of listening to that voice calling them and speaking to their heart. Secondly, the adorable Shepherd's voice calling them and prompting them into action according to their condition and the dispositions he has put into them is in harmony with their supernatural tastes and desires and everything they feel in themselves. They easily understand the attraction they experience to be indeed the Shepherd's voice. And instead of resisting and opposing they follow. The meaning is the same when we explain the words, 'he walks before them', by the shepherd's example, because they recognize his voice calling them along after him through this interior appeal.

5. *Alienum autem non sequuntur,  
sed fugiunt ab eo, quia non  
noverunt vocem ejus.*

5. *A stranger they will not follow,  
but they will flee from him, for  
they do not know the voice of  
strangers."*



'But a stranger'. The stranger is the bogus shepherd, who comes in his own name, acts all alone and pursues his own interests. He is a stranger to our Lord's sheep because they do not belong to him and he has no right to draw them to himself, guide or rule them. Even when he has been called legitimately through God's voice, as soon as he speaks of himself and for himself he is a stranger and speaks without right, since all the power and authority he has over the sheep are really the power and authority of the sovereign Shepherd.

Therefore, when a stranger comes like that to draw sheep, to make them move according to his caprice and ideas and who does not act as one at the disposal of the great Shepherd, whose voice he is called to transmit, the sheep do not follow him. His words do not make a supernatural impression, souls do not feel the spiritual attraction to commit themselves to what is offered for their inspiration and seek it.

'But they flee'. Far from following the impression the stranger wants to make on them, they experience on the contrary a feeling of opposition and resistance. They flee both the suggestions offered and the shepherds offering them. This opposition and coldness of souls towards shepherds who are strangers and act in a merely human way, seeking to draw people to themselves, can truly be called spiritual flight. The more these bogus shepherds desire to direct them, and the more they call them spiritually to follow them, the more these souls withdraw and go away.

What is the source of these repugnances, desires to flee, oppositions, tensions and afflictions, experienced by good people who are true sheep normally, happy to obey their Shepherd and follow him? The reason is that they hear a strange voice that they do not recognise. In the voice of the shepherd in charge of them they want to hear the voice of their own Shepherd, the adorable divine Jesus. For they have, as it were, a spiritual ear which distinguishes and discerns the voice of that adorable Shepherd echoing in the very depths of their soul, in perfect accord with their condition and attraction.

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When a bogus shepherd speaks a natural language in a natural way based on natural thoughts and interests, this language conflicts with the Shepherd's; it upsets their tastes and all their spiritual and supernatural attractions and it troubles their inner self. That is what our divine Master calls 'not knowing the voice of strangers'. For note that our Lord does not say: 'they did not know his voice', but 'the voice of others'. This means that once it is not our Lord's voice, whoever the stranger may be, souls do not hear it. It produces the bad effects just listed.

Only the supernatural voice of our Lord can penetrate into the spiritual ideas, tastes and attractions of such persons; to him their ears are immediately sensitive and he enters. As soon as they listen, his word enters their hearts and produces its effects. People follow him (for we speak of people who are simple, docile and obedient to divine grace). That is why our Lord says they do not follow, but flee, because they do not know the voice of strangers.

6. *Hoc proverbium dixit eis Jesus:  
Illi autem non cognoverunt quid  
loqueretur eis.*

6. *This figure Jesus used with them,  
but they did not understand  
what he was saying to them.*

This parable was addressed to the Pharisees, who had all the faults that constitute bogus shepherds. They categorically refused to act in the name of the true Shepherd, they wholly repudiated him; they wanted to act independently in everything, relying only on themselves, and drawing souls to themselves; this made them thieves and brigands. And our Lord showed them the evil results of this theft and robbery in pastoral activity. The sheep flee instead of listening, whereas they listen to and follow the true Shepherd, as was clear in the case of the man born blind. The Pharisees spoke with him, but he resisted with all his might; our Lord, the true Shepherd, spoke with him and he was docile like a true sheep. The reason is that the voice of the Pharisees was the voice of strangers while our Lord's was the true Shepherd's.

The Pharisees were so far from thinking badly of themselves

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that it seemed impossible to regard themselves, or think they could be regarded, as bogus shepherds. They were so unaware of their entrenched evil dispositions in guiding the sheep entrusted to them that they could not grasp what our Lord said. Moreover they did not even know what the obligations and functions of a shepherd were. They saw themselves at the head of the people of God and thought only of profiting to their own advantage, as if the sheep were made for them and not they for the sheep, who belong to the sovereign Shepherd. That is another major reason they understood nothing of the parable our Lord addressed to them.

7. *Dixit ergo eis iterum Jesus:  
Amen, amen, dico vobis, quia  
ego sum ostium ovium.*

7. *So Jesus again, "Truly, truly, I  
say to you, I am the door of the  
sheep.*

8. *Omnes, quotquot venerunt,  
fures sunt, et latrones, et non  
audierunt eos oves.*

8. *All who came before me are  
thieves and robbers; but the  
sheep did not heed them.*

As the Pharisees had not understood his figurative language, our Lord now explained clearly. There were two principal things they had not understood which he now explained. The first concerned the door to enter, the second the Shepherd who has his own sheep and to whom alone the doorkeeper opens. He began by explaining what the door was, as was said above. Our Lord says 'the door of the sheep' and not 'of the sheepfold', to show clearly that it is not an entrance door for the assembly of the faithful in general, as would be the lawful vocation and jurisdiction received from a true superior and (in the case of the shepherds of the New Testament) through the sacrament of the priesthood. More especially he refers to a special entrance to the hearts of the faithful. Souls belong to God, so he means here the supernatural entrance to guide and direct them and so on. Each heart is closed. Jesus Christ is the only door to people's hearts. 'I am the door of the sheep'. Whatever other way one enters, one is a thief and a brigand.



Our Lord says 'they came' because he means the Pharisees. After stating the principle, he explains what flowed from it in the way Pharisees related to people. The Pharisees were thieves, and the sheep did not hear them. He says 'heard' in the past tense and not 'hear' in the present, just as he says 'they are thieves' for the same reason as he says 'door of the sheep'. As these false shepherds entered by a false door, the true door to people's hearts remained always closed to them. Consequently, if they entered it was not because the sheep heard them, but by force and trickery; souls neither listened nor heard. If they had entered by the right door, then at their very entry souls would have heard them. The heart opens only on hearing the Shepherd's voice. And so, all the Pharisees who governed and guided souls in virtue of principles other than those of our Lord, faith and grace, were thieves. They acted for themselves and not for the Master of the flock. Moreover they addressed people in order to govern and direct them while the people closed themselves to them and had no liking for them; indeed the false shepherds merely tormented, troubled, disturbed and annoyed the people in their efforts to serve God.

9. *Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit salvabitur; et ingredietur, et egredietur et pascua inveniet.*

9. *I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

Of course true shepherds are at one and at the same time both shepherds and sheep. Our Lord is the only Shepherd, and all other shepherds are his sheep. They are sheep with regard to their own salvation; they are shepherds in so far as they deal with the salvation and guidance of others. But in the very occupation of working for the salvation of others they find their reality as sheep. For, if they fulfil their pastoral duties as they should, they find their own life, and in that very pastoral work itself they must be submissive to the leadership of the sovereign Shepherd. They must be his sheep, to receive everything a sheep does from its shepherd. That is why our Lord repeats the words: 'I am the door',

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to show that he is not only the means of access to people for pastoral work but that, even as sheep, the shepherds must enter by this door for their own salvation.

That shows how essential it is for shepherds to exercise their pastoral functions perfectly, for if they do not enter by the right door they lose as much for themselves as for they do for the people entrusted to them. For this reason our Shepherd adds: 'If anyone enters through me, he will be saved'. The losses caused to souls by a shepherd who does not enter by the true door are numerous and great, and the risks he runs himself are immense. There is, first of all, the evil that dwells in the very exercise of priestly and pastoral functions when the actions are performed in a purely natural way and for selfish purposes. Besides that, a shepherd who consistently exercises pastoral functions in a wrong way, independently of the sovereign and only Shepherd, will inevitably be lost. If he enters by the true door he will be saved. The graces given to a true shepherd are immense. As much as his task is of a higher order and his functions place him above the sheep, so much greater will be his grace; higher than what is commonly given to the sheep.

Moreover, the devotedness that a true pastoral office demands of him for the perfect exercise of his functions, if he truly enters through our Lord, (i.e. engages in his ministry) will necessarily be rewarded with outstanding graces. But the capital reason is that a shepherd who has these proper dispositions is in intimate constant touch with our Lord, the sovereign Shepherd, by the very fact that he enters the sheepfold through this divine door; outstanding graces necessarily flow from this.

'And he will enter, and will go out, and will find pastures'. These are the three chief pastoral duties. 'And he will enter'. His occupation is to give himself to souls and their guidance: heal their ills, strengthen their weaknesses, encourage their faint-heartedness, use the good in them to make them advance; he must give them proper spiritual direction to establish them on the true way of perfection, prevent them from being sidetracked, and

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assure their progress. He must also be actively solicitous with the tenderness the true Shepherd gives him. All this is involved in 'entering into souls': 'And he will enter'. 'And he will go out'. This is the function of governing, of directing externally and guiding the sheep, arranging everything necessary for the practice of virtue and useful works. If the shepherd has 'entered into souls' by the right door, he will go out without difficulty and the sheep will follow him. To the function of going out belongs also the function of protecting them from all enemies, i.e. the shepherd's vigilance; defending them when they are attacked, the shepherd's devotedness. It is for this purpose he is at their head, for he should be there not only to attract them to follow him but to defend them against all enemies.

'And he will find pastures'. The third pastoral duty is to feed his sheep. If the shepherd comes only in his own name, how can he find nourishment for the sheep? It is impossible for someone to be nourished by what comes only from another person acting independently of our Lord. A person can amuse others; he can win the attention of their minds, please their imagination, even get them to make natural resolutions to practise virtues in a natural way. But such a one cannot nourish another soul, for it is certain that one who acts entirely independently of our Lord has nothing with which to feed another. How could he give what he has not?

Hence it is of the greatest importance not to give from our own resources but from the inexhaustible resources of our Lord. And souls are only solidly nourished to the extent that their nourishment is drawn from our Lord. When the shepherd does things by halves, half by faith and half by nature, the food he serves is mediocre. This is what happens most shepherds. But the saints, who were wholly rooted in our Lord, used to give so substantial a food that countless people were able to enjoy it.

This is what our divine Shepherd says here: 'And he will find pastures'. The shepherd will find them not in himself but in his sovereign Shepherd, who is Shepherd and nourishment at the same time. But the wicked, who have no recourse to the true

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Shepherd, give nothing; and souls remain sterile and dry under their hands. And if it happens that their words or actions do produce some effect, if their preaching on occasion does something for the faithful, that effect is often natural, it remains in the imagination alone and is ephemeral. Frequently God may please to use such people to save a soul, or even several, for whom he has merciful plans and whom he himself nourishes even when empty words are spoken. He does what he once did through Moses: he makes living water issue from hard sterile rock.

10. *Fur non venit nisi ut furetur, et mactet, et perdat. Ego veni ut vitam habeant, et abundantius habeant.*

10. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Our Lord goes on to describe the thief more fully, contrasting him with himself, the true Shepherd. Firstly, in the thief there is nothing of the supernatural; he pays no heed to our Lord; he has no thought of acting from a standpoint of faith. Secondly, he acts for himself and of himself; our divine Master says: 'he comes only...', which excludes any other purpose, view or action. 'Nothing else but to steal': There is his intention of satisfying himself, of drawing profit from the sheep he governs, to the exclusion of everything else. He does not attend to supernatural motives or the good of souls.

The thief is concerned with pleasing himself by a variety of pleasures, taking care of his own interests, flattering his pride and vanity. If he has to exercise priestly or pastoral functions, these he performs in the same spirit as other things, that is, for his own interest, pleasure and pride. As long as it conforms to this threefold passion, he does it with care; if not, he barely does what he is obliged to. Therein lies the thieving.

'And to slaughter'. The other effects necessarily follow. He does not act like someone who must devote himself to the well-being of his flock and sacrifice himself in caring for them and saving them but rather as if the flock were made for him, and he exercises his

authority violently. Does a sheep resist him? He strikes it without thinking of the harm he does but only of his own hurt. He has a temper and his temper meets opposition in the sheep, so he kills and scatters the sheep in his temper.

The thief has his likes and dislikes, which he indulges as his passions move him. He attracts some people and repels others, doing harm to all of them without a qualm. One quite often comes on shepherds defending points of religion, but with disproportionate bitterness and bluntness; it is their own temper they are defending. How difficult it is to be a good shepherd! — because it is difficult to be empty of self and filled with our Lord, the great Shepherd of both shepherds and sheep.

‘And to destroy’: A good shepherd will willingly suffer all kinds of injuries, take all sorts of precautions and go to great trouble in order to prevent the loss of one of his sheep. No sacrifice will be too great; he will exercise extraordinary patience, longanimity, gentleness and prudence. Especially for one of the meek ones he will act with the utmost tact and prefer to suffer himself than take any step that might risk the loss of a soul. The shepherd who is a thief is far from that. His own satisfaction is his guiding principle; he will treat weak and strong alike, tactless except for his own interests. Without a thought he will give play to his discontent and even vengeance. He will speak and act in spiritual matters which are most delicate as if he had no responsibility for saving people but only for his own honour, satisfaction and profit.

Not only will he neglect to save them on account of his evil passions and his desire to satisfy his sloth and other evil inclinations, but he will positively bring about their loss because of these same passions and inclinations of his perverse nature. Our divine Master says: ‘he comes only to kill and to destroy’. These are positive acts, and these divine words are true and always will be. They indicate an action of striking and causing the loss of something. All shepherds who want to steal will act thus.

‘I came’. Our Lord now shows the difference between himself and wicked shepherds. He contrasts himself with the wicked

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shepherds to bring out the differences in intentions and results. The bad shepherd comes only in order to steal, to massacre, to destroy. He accomplishes his plans and fulfills his desires only at the expense of the sheep and to their detriment. Our Lord, the true Shepherd, came for the opposite purpose, namely, to give life to the sheep. He does not say: 'I have not come for anything else than that they should have life', for that would imply that his one and only purpose was the sheep, while in reality his direct purpose and principal intention was his Father's will and glory. But he says 'I came that they may have life', and that is the truth for although he came for his Father's glory yet that glory and the fulfilment of the Father's will were to be obtained only through giving life to the sheep.

He rightly says: 'The Son of man did not come to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him' (Jn 3:17). If he had come to judge, he would frequently fulfil and apply his Father's will to the hurt of the sheep, but, since he came only to save, all his dealings with the sheep and his whole purpose in coming are to give life. So he truthfully says: 'I have come that they may have life'. Now, since he came to give them life and to pursue no other end, he is therefore a true shepherd. He is the absolute owner of the flock, having bought it at the price of his blood. He alone may draw profit from it for his glory. But the extraordinary thing is that the glory and profit derived from his flock turn to the advantage of the flock and never to its detriment.

The good shepherd enriches his sheep by the glory he receives from them, while all those other shepherds can draw benefits from the sheep only to their own detriment and destruction. Now every time a shepherd exploits the sheep for his own profit he is not performing a pastoral act, since the pastoral office consists in feeding and taking care of the sheep; he is acting the brigand, stealing and despoiling. All this shows that our Lord is the only true Shepherd, not only because he alone owns the flock but also because he alone feeds his flock without ever despoiling them. He feeds, directs and guides the sheep only to bring about their

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development, to fatten and strengthen them, not to despoil them, as those other shepherds do.

‘That they may have life’. The great purpose, the only purpose for which our divine Shepherd came to us, was to give life. This is the foundation and totality of all pastoral work. All other cares connected with it relate to that. It is so essential to pastoral work that the word pastor or shepherd is derived from it. He pastures the sheep and leads them to pastures. Our Lord as sovereign, unique and perfect Shepherd came that the sheep might have life, and this life they receive from the Shepherd himself. He feeds and vivifies them from the abundance of his very being, not just like an ordinary shepherd who gives his life, but with great abundance. Nor is he satisfied with feeding and sustaining the life of his sheep; he fattens and satisfies them superabundantly: ‘and have it abundantly’.

This abundance of life surpasses all we can conceive; it enables us to see how great is the divine shepherd’s love for his sheep. The pains he takes to give them this superabundance are so great that, however little they correspond, they receive it in great abundance. He came on earth, he became incarnate, he surrendered to death and passed through all these mysteries and states of life, in order to merit and multiply the divine pastures which would fatten the sheep, pastures sufficient to feed a hundred million more in the same way.

To make the divine pasture available which he prepared and still daily prepares for them, now that he is seated at the Father’s right hand, he established the seven sacraments as so many channels through which divine life is guaranteed to them. In these they receive the Holy Spirit with all the gifts and beatitudes that ensue. He rightly says: ‘And they will have it more abundantly’. There lies the difference between our divine Shepherd and the thieves who act as if they were shepherds. Those who are true shepherds, who come in the name and through the power of the great and adorable Shepherd, are his other self. His truth and pastoral life are in them, they hold in their hands all the food and

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pastures destined by the sovereign Shepherd for each of the sheep entrusted to them. We must take care, however, not to be misled by this into thinking that the wicked shepherds who act selfishly are not able to impart life through the sacraments, which have been instituted by the divine Shepherd as so many channels to pass on to the flock the heavenly food. This would be a gross error and a heresy condemned by the Church. Since the sacraments are infallible channels through which our Lord imparts his grace to his sheep, it is not the false shepherds who give the nourishment; it is not under their control. Whenever they administer the sacraments, the divine Shepherd himself gives what the sacraments signify.

Their self-seeking is in vain, they cannot deprive the sheep of the nourishment he gives. One way bad shepherds can harm souls is by keeping people away and depriving them of these divine sacraments; this they can do through passion, evil inclinations and habits of evil conduct towards the sheep. Besides that, they cause great harm to souls by depriving them of a certain superabundance of grace which depends on how well people are prepared for the sacraments. But wicked shepherds sometimes not only fail to prepare people for the sacraments but even keep them from properly preparing.

11. *Ego sum Pastor bonus. Bonus  
Pastor animam suam dat pro  
ovibus suis.*

11. *I am the good shepherd. The  
good shepherd lays down his life  
for his sheep.*

So far, then, our Lord has shown us what characterizes a bad shepherd: he devours the sheep instead of feeding them; he loses them and neglects them; he acts only for his own advantage, although the sheep do not belong to him. Our Lord has made a comparison to himself, and has shown that the bad shepherd does exactly the opposite and is not truly a shepherd. Here he begins comparing himself to another kind of blameworthy shepherd, namely, the mercenary. So he begins by saying: 'I am the good shepherd'. Until now he has spoken about people who were not

shepherds but thieves, and he let it be understood that he is the only true Shepherd. Now he will speak of those who are not thieves, those who come in the name of the sovereign Shepherd, but are more or less bad and reprehensible.

The mercenary is not a thief, he is simply not a good shepherd; that is why our Lord says: 'I am the good Shepherd'. Here he does not make the contrast between himself and the false shepherd, because the false shepherd does the exact opposite of what the true Shepherd says here. The good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep and the false shepherd, on the contrary, kills the sheep for his own advantage, so there is no comparison to be made. Moreover it is clear that the false shepherd lacks the elements that constitute pastoral care. The point here is the quality needed in a shepherd, namely, he must be a good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. Hence there can be no comparison with thieves, for thieves are not shepherds at all, they lack the essential.

A shepherd pastures his sheep and takes care of them. A good shepherd gives his life in order to nurture and preserve the life of his sheep. Our Lord in speaking of the shepherd is speaking of the perfection of a good shepherd. And perfection here means readiness for self-sacrifice for another to whom we show kindness. Now this precisely is what the true unique good Shepherd did. He gave his life willingly for his sheep. All those who enter into pastoral office in the name of the great Shepherd and act by his pastoral spirit do as much. They carry their zeal for the flock of the sovereign Shepherd unto the sacrifice of themselves with all they have and their very life if necessary.

12. *Mercenarius autem, et qui non est pastor, cujus non sunt oves propriae, vidit lupum venientem, et dimittit oves, et fugit: et lupus rapit et dispergit oves.*

12. *He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.*



13. *Mercenarius autem fugit, quia  
mercenarius est, et non pertinet ad  
eum de ovibus.*

13. *He flees because he is a hireling  
and cares nothing for the sheep.*

The good Shepherd gives his life to defend the life of his flock, but the mercenary flees at the slightest danger and lets the sheep perish by the vicious attacks of the enemy, against whom he does not defend them. He does not even take minimum precautions to put up a defense against the enemy as soon as he sees the wolf coming to ravish the sheep, he flees at once for fear of perishing or suffering harm. 'When he sees the wolf coming': the mercenary is weak and a coward; he is afraid to suffer anything for his flock. He pastures the sheep carefully, and takes care of them satisfactorily for his Master, as long as this brings himself some pleasure and contentment, but he will go to no great pains unless it gives advantage to his self-love or pleases him in some other way. Particularly when it is a question of endangering what he is naturally attached to, such as family, friends, temporal goods and interests, reputation, he stands back and lets the sheep perish.

In the multitude of shepherds who pasture the flock of our Lord Jesus Christ there are perhaps only a small number of thieves and brigands, but how numerous are the mercenary shepherds, pastors who pasture themselves at the same time as they pasture the flock of the great Shepherd. These mercenaries are cowardly, lukewarm and unenergetic when it comes to saving souls, but full of ardent zeal for their personal interests. They will not do anything directly to lose a soul for the sake of their own interests, since they still have a certain fear, but they will be negligent and, as soon as their interest is at stake, they will neglect the flock still more and sometimes even abandon it; they will let souls perish rather than risk danger. The term, 'abandons the sheep', expresses the mercenary's negligence in leaving the sheep helpless. 'And he flees'; that is, he looks for his own safety and seeks his own advantage and interest.

At the beginning of verse 12, our Lord points to three things defective in the mercenary, which cause damage to souls. 'But the

mercenary': the first fault is that he seeks personal gain, he takes care of the Master's flock to serve his own interests. This self-seeking and attachment to his own interests, whether to enrich himself or for his pleasure and whim or to flatter his self-love, leave the shepherd weak, self-centered and fearful. 'And who is not a shepherd': our Lord means the mercenary is not really shepherd of the flock, he does not feel for his sheep. For, besides the disinterestedness of the true shepherd, he should exhibit watchful, burning zeal, full of love for his sheep.

The mercenary is indifferent towards his flock unless the personal interests mentioned above are at stake. It follows that he is niggardly about the good of his flock and spiritless in defending them. 'Whose own the sheep are not'. The sheep do not belong to him, whence his indifference; the sheep are outsiders to him; he has no love for them or attachment to them, he is cold towards them. On the other hand, he warms to his own interests. This means that as soon as he sees himself and his interests in danger because of the flock he leaves the flock and assures his interests with as much care and fervour as the good Shepherd does for his sheep by sacrificing himself.

The difference between the thief and the hireling is that the former does not come in the name of the true Shepherd and does not work for him but for himself; he only seeks his own interests and that at the expense of the flock, to whose interests he is completely indifferent. The latter comes in our Lord's name and works for him; he takes an interest in the flock and seeks its good whenever that does not harm his own well-being. When his interests and those of the flock clash, he puts himself before the flock; that precisely is what makes him a hireling. He guards his Master's flock with the intention of getting something out of it. What makes him blameworthy is that he places his own interests before those of the Master of the flock and before the well-being of the sheep. That is a sketch of the hireling.

Genuine shepherds are altogether different. They are completely disinterested and act only for the divine Shepherd's interests,

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consciously sacrificing all they have and all they can do for the good of the flock. They have the mind of the divine Shepherd and feel as he does for the flock in all their behaviour. Lastly, the flock as good as belongs to them, because they are fully united with the sovereign Shepherd and act all the time according to his mind. Rather it is he who acts in them. Their activity, then, is really that of the Shepherd who owns the sheep. They are as attached to them and as interested in them as the great Shepherd would be. The hireling fancies he is doing no harm, for he has done nothing to lose the souls entrusted to him. But his fault is one of omission; this turns him instantly into a bad shepherd, one who loses the Master's flock.

'And the wolf snatches them'. What is the wolf? It is the enemy of salvation always prowling around the flock. He appears before the shepherd, raising difficulties and trouble, causing damage to the interests he knows the shepherd values. A priest wants to undertake some good work that he knows will be advantageous for the salvation of souls. Then the wolf appears on the scene. All sorts of material difficulties arise: opposition of friends, anguish of relatives, loss of reputation. If he is a hireling he will flee. Why? precisely because he is a hireling, out for his own interests, not keeping or caring for the flock with pure single-mindedness, since he does not take an interest in his flock with a shepherd's real zeal. The flock is not his, it is someone else's so he abandons it.

The same thing happens in lots of similar circumstances: devout, useful preaching, good direction of souls to help them improve, and so on. But more usually it happens in the ordinary work of ministry. The hireling is slow to take the steps or provide care necessary for the flock's safety. The wolf appears and the unfortunate fellow abandons his flock in the middle of the greatest dangers, leaving it to its own devices without further assistance. And what is a flock without guide or defender in the presence of a formidable wolf? The wolf will make away with the sheep he can snatch and disperse the whole flock, disorganizing it and leaving it bereft of all unity and fervour. 'The hireling flees

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because he is a hireling', and so on. The hireling sees the chaos that will result from his carelessness and his calculated behaviour. He gives the enemy a free hand and disappears.

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| 14. <i>Ego sum Pastor bonus; et cognosco meas, et cognoscunt me meae.</i>                    | 14. <i>I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,</i>                           |
| 15. <i>Sicut novit me Pater, et ego agnosco Patrem: at animam meam pono pro ovibus meis.</i> | 15. <i>as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.</i> |

Our divine Shepherd reveals one of the great qualities of the good shepherd. He has already said that he calls his sheep by name. Now he goes further, explaining the divine knowledge he has of his sheep and the knowledge he gives his sheep about their adorable Shepherd. The knowledge our divine Master speaks of here is something wonderful. It shows the love-relationship that exists between shepherd and sheep. The adorable Jesus, being a good Shepherd towards his sheep, gives his beloved sheep a whole way of being good sheep. At the same time as the sheep receive the inspirations their adorable Shepherd gives them and feel the influence of his divine shepherding, they receive what is needed to possess the attitudes of good, true sheep and to express these. This is no ordinary common knowledge, its origin is divine and adorable; it is not the knowledge one person has of another, it is divine knowledge.

Our Lord knows his sheep as his Father knows him, and his sheep know him as the Son knows the Father. This is a loving knowledge, as should be the knowledge we have in pastoral work. Our Lord compares it to that which his Father has of him, because this knowledge is full of accommodating love; it brings forth divine love, since the Holy Spirit is simply love proceeding from the Father and the Son.

The knowledge the Father has of the Son, of which our Lord is speaking may also mean the Father's loving knowledge of the Son of man, which is rather a shepherd's loving knowledge because it

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is knowledge by the higher of the lower, by him who gives life of him who receives it. And, reciprocally, the Son of man's love for his heavenly Father is the love of a sheep, of docility; consequently it is a loving knowledge of one who gives and communicates all he has, a knowledge of his way of acting and of all that entails in his sacred humanity as Shepherd.

Likewise, the loving shepherd's knowledge our Lord has of us, and the knowledge we have of our Shepherd, of how he feeds, leads and guides us, is a loving knowledge of docility. A particular feature of this loving knowledge is that, over and above the knowledge the Shepherd has of his flock in order to love it with a shepherd's love and over and above the knowledge the sheep have of the shepherd in order to love him with a love of docility, there also exists mutual knowledge within that mutual love, and this in turn gives rise to new outpourings of love. That is why our Lord says, 'I know my own and my own know me'. He acknowledges them as his own, and they in return acknowledge him as the one they belong to; their love then will correspond to that knowledge.

The better to explain this knowledge and the comparison our Lord makes about it, one could say the following. The Father's knowledge of the Son has two main characteristics; it is intimate and it is substantial. First, it is intimate. The Father so knows his Son that he is wholly in his Son, in such a way that the Father's infinite intelligence dwells wholly in the infinite intelligence of the Son, and therein is ceaselessly active, just as he exists in himself and sees and understands himself.

Second, it is substantial, because of the eternal infinite knowledge the Father has of the whole infinite essence that is in his Son. He sees and understands from all eternity his own being and essence and by this same knowledge he communicates it to him substantially. The Son knows the Father similarly. He knows him infinitely, since he is as much in the Father as he is in himself. He knows him substantially, since the knowledge he has of his Father is the same knowledge that the Father has of himself.

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Furthermore, by this knowledge the Son knows the Father's substance and very essence to be his whole substance and whole essence.

Now the Shepherd's knowledge of which our Lord speaks is the same. Our Lord, who is our sovereign adorable Shepherd, knows us as his Father knows him, that is to say, intimately. He penetrates to our depths by his divine grace, he knows all the movements of our soul. He is more present to us than we are to ourselves; he knows all that goes on within us much better than we do, so much so that nothing happens within us that he does not see and notice. Therein lies the great virtue of the genuine good Shepherd, to see and follow everything taking place in his sheep and thereby to guide and lead them according to what is needed and good for them. Thus in all we are and do our divine Shepherd is always in us, to regulate and direct us with all his power and, simultaneously, with all his shepherd's love. This attentiveness of his is constant, like his Father's attentiveness to himself.

'And my own know me'. Our spirit, for its part, if it is that of a 'true and good sheep', knows our Lord, its Shepherd, as he knows his Father. It will remain always intellectually attentive to its divine Shepherd, understanding and following the lead he wants to give it. It will know him for what he is to it: its Master, its Shepherd, its God and its all. It will know him not only in himself but in itself. It will feel and see constantly that Jesus is everything in him, as Jesus sees that his Father is in him. This knowledge will be intimate to our souls, since it is the divine Shepherd himself making his presence felt.

This knowledge is also substantial. Jesus, our Shepherd, knows us the way the Father knows him. He sees himself in believers who are really sheep, because everything in them is from him. Jesus dwells in his sheep, for his sheep are genuinely his only to the extent that Jesus fills them with his spirit. That his sheep receive this very knowledge is a grace given by Jesus, their Shepherd, bestowed on his sheep only so that he can shower them with further graces and favours. And the sheep are aware of the



life and grace of Jesus, their Shepherd, within them; they know themselves to be his sheep with all the feelings and attitudes of genuine sheep, for they know their divine Shepherd in the way he knows his Father. This knowledge of theirs' stems from the knowledge Jesus has of them.

Our Lord says 'mine' and not 'my sheep'. He wants to show that this knowledge only applies to those who are his possession and arises from that very fact; for the shepherd-relationship of our divine Shepherd is with the faithful who are in Jesus, and whom Jesus possesses within himself as his very own. He chooses his words carefully, to indicate ownership and private possession. Precisely here lies the point of how this knowledge is comparable to that of Jesus and his Father. Our Lord says first, 'I am the good shepherd', before speaking of this heavenly knowledge, because in fact this knowledge, thus understood, contains all that is best in the attentiveness of the Shepherd to his sheep.

'And I lay down my life for my sheep'. This is the perfection of pastoral activity, as our Lord has already said above. He concludes what he has to say against the hireling and shows that he himself goes to the limit of being a good shepherd. He speaks of two things. First, he says the hireling does not give full attentiveness to his sheep; naturally, since he does not put his heart into his work or have their mind, he asks for reward, does not seek out his sheep or love them in themselves. This knowledge, this full, intelligent attention necessarily presupposes true love .

Secondly, he speaks of giving his life for his sheep. Something far from the hireling's mind he, the good Shepherd, our divine Master, expresses it. Our Lord does not say, 'I will lay down', but, 'I lay down', even though it was then still in the future. He speaks of the moment itself. For a twofold reason he could say 'I lay down' in the present. First, because of his perfect readiness to die for his sheep. Secondly, because our Saviour at every moment of his earthly life saw his passion and death as present. He was different from other people in this. When people foresee something that will happen to them, they are never absolutely

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certain; they do not know all the circumstances that might arise to prevent the outcome; furthermore, even in the case where they see the thing with absolute certainty, they never see it exactly as it will happen or as it will appear the moment it does happen.

As for something bad, hope prevents them from seeing it. Even if it is good, a certain satisfaction does not allow them to see it precisely as it is, for the imagination creates illusory obstacles while passionate desires tend to obscure the vision. Our divine Master saw things as he was going to see them in reality, he experienced all their strength and immediacy. Thus he suffered death for his sheep every moment of his life. While he was speaking, in effect he offered his life to his Father for his sheep.

Another possible reason for the phrase 'I lay down' is this. The divine Shepherd was not speaking of the actual act of sacrifice he would accomplish on Calvary, but of the application of its fruits to souls. No believer can become a sheep of Jesus except through his sacrifice on its behalf. It is a general phrase, something of general application from the beginning of the world until the end. All those who are sheep of the great Shepherd, this divine Shepherd has won by dying for them. He sees those souls in the wolf's clutches, he snatches them from him by dying for them. So he says, 'I lay down', in the present tense. Not only has he done it, not only will he do it. He is always doing it, he could not be shepherd otherwise, for he always finds his sheep in the wolf's jaws, from which he pulls them only by his own death.

16. *Et aliae oves habeo, quae non sunt ex hoc ovili: et illas oportet me adducere, et vocem meam audient, et fiet unum ovile, et unus pastor.*

16. *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.*

The sheep our Lord speaks of here are the gathering of gentiles whom he was to draw into his fold. These sheep were not yet in the fold, and our divine Shepherd says he has to bring them in.

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'They are not of this fold', says our Lord. 'Of this' indicates the synagogue, which at that time was the fold where the sheep were to be found. The gentiles were not of the synagogue, they were outside the fold. Not only were they outside the fold, they had never been in it. In the former Church subsisting in the synagogue, generally speaking there were no sheep who did not come from the synagogues or at least who were not affiliated to them. But our Lord wished to set up a universal fold. He drew to himself all the gentiles and formed another fold, which, it is true, took its origin in the former but had its own existence and was not inferior to the first. Both together constituted only one fold, directed and governed by one sole Shepherd. The earlier fold, (of Israel) too small to enclose so many sheep, was destroyed. The whole universality of the flock was reunited into one fold, established by the divine Shepherd himself and capable of containing this large flock and providing its sustenance.

Our Lord says, 'who are not of this fold'. The new fold was not the same, but much more perfect than the former and made from it. Apart from the fact that all the sheep of the former were meant to enter into the latter, the great Shepherd had still others who were not of the former fold and who, nevertheless, were meant to enter into the new fold that he was going to set up. Our Lord says, 'other sheep I have', although these sheep were still far off and at that moment were not yet actually his sheep. But we have only to recall what the divine Master says elsewhere: all that the Father gives me will come to me' (Jn 6:36). These sheep had been given to him by his Father, so they belonged to him and no one would be able to take them from him. Consequently our Lord could say truthfully that he had still other sheep. For, in order that the gentiles should already belong to him from that moment, it sufficed that his Father had given them to him. Now it is quite sure that all the gentiles who in the course of time have become sheep have been given to this adorable Shepherd by his heavenly Father; they belong to him as his own.

On the other hand, everyone who belongs to him is a sheep, for

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he only came to give them pasture. Consequently he could say in all truth that he had, there and then, other sheep belonging to him from that time, even though they were outside the fold. But that was exactly why he was obliged to bring them within the fold, because he said that all those whom his Father gave him came to him; if he did not go and look for them they could not come.

Elsewhere he says that he lost nothing of all those whom his Father gave him and his Father's will was that he would not cast out any who came to him. 'I must bring them'. He calls them sheep at this very moment, for so they were according to his Father's will. He says, 'and they will heed my voice'. At the moment our Lord was speaking, they did not heed his voice, because it was not yet time. When the time fixed by his Father had come, then the divine Shepherd called his new sheep, which had been given to him by his Father, and from then on they heeded his voice, they were faithful and filled with joy. Thus our Lord foretold the great fervour and eagerness with which the gentiles who had been given to the great Shepherd received the word of faith and followed the attraction of divine grace. This was a new experience for them, yet they responded to it with great faith and fidelity.

Our Lord's voice is both the word of faith proclaimed by the holy apostles and that interior word which the Master of the apostles spoke to those blessed souls. Our Lord also spoke thus to make a contrast with those who were naturally to be his sheep, those of the previous fold who did not listen to his voice. These people made poor use of all his goodness and gifts, they were sheep gone astray, pertaining no more to the divine Shepherd, while these new sheep received the Shepherd's divine word with inexpressible joy and tender love. They matched and soon surpassed the former sheep. These sheep belonged to him before they suspected it. The divine Shepherd already had his eyes on them and never lost sight of them for a second; 'other sheep I have'. But they could only enter the fold when they heard his voice.

A remarkable point against heretics emerges from this verse. Our divine Master says he has other sheep to bring into this fold; in that we see the work of grace, by which the divine Shepherd makes loving advances to bring them in. 'And they will heed my voice', he adds; there we see the sheep cooperating with grace. They will be faithful to that work of grace by receiving and following it. What happens after that? There will be one flock, one Shepherd. From the meeting of human will with divine grace, it comes about that a believer will belong to our Lord, our Lord will become its Master and Shepherd. If these sheep had not listened to the Shepherd's voice which led them in, the great fold could not have been made.

'And there will be one flock and one shepherd'. Our divine Master shows us the unity of faith in his Church. The Old Testament was a flock, but a flock based on external practices; for what distinguished the people of the Mosaic law from others was only external practices. Practices identified them as the sheep of Israel; for example, they had circumcision as a mark and sign that they were genuine sheep. These practices joined to faith formed the flock of the house of Israel.

The sheep outside the house of Israel, the gentiles who believed in one God and observed the natural law, like Job, Naaman, Jethro and others, these were sheep, but they did not belong to the fold established by God in Israel, which, essentially, was after all the true fold. The faith of these sheep drawn from the gentiles was the same as Israel's, but they were lacking the special mark of the sheep of Israel, namely, circumcision and the practices of the law. It follows that the members of this flock, who basically were absolutely the same as gentile believers, varied nevertheless in one thing, which, for the time of the law of outward practices, was an essential distinguishing mark. For that very reason union was not perfect within this flock.

But in the new fold the divine Shepherd will reunite all his sheep to form one and the same flock and have them all enter into one and the same fold. And at that time the essential and unique

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character of his sheep will be on their souls, a character formed by the Holy Spirit, a character which will unite all the fold and make all the sheep manageable and tractable under one and the same Shepherd. This is the new Church which the divine Shepherd has formed, in which a unity of perfect faith will reign. This precisely is what will constitute the flock. Whenever any part of this fold holds a belief that is not the same as that of the whole, that part is no longer of the fold, since there is only one fold. Further, it will no longer have the sovereign Shepherd as its shepherd; for, as the flock is one, so will there be only one Shepherd; and as the Shepherd is unique so will his fold be unique. This is the divine Shepherd, who teaches, who inspires, who guides and rules his single fold in such a way that all teaching, all behaviour, all inspiration and all government which are not those of the whole flock cannot stem from the true Shepherd.

There being only one Shepherd, all teaching, all inspiration and so on must be the same in the whole flock. It follows that all teaching, conduct, inspiration, government which are not that of the true flock (of Christ) do not come from the true Shepherd. As there is only one Shepherd, all teaching, all inspiration etc. must be the same for the whole flock. Hence those sheep who have values which are not found in the rest of the flock, do not receive them from the true pastor, the unique pastor. Consequently, the divine Pastor is not their pastor.

People who compose a faith for themselves according to their own ideas, without fearing to separate themselves from the faith of the fold, or who are not willing to follow the government and behaviour of the whole flock, these people are truly unfortunate. They leave and cut themselves off from the divine fold, which alone was established for God's sheep. And, further, they withdraw from the sovereign Shepherd's authority, declaring formally by their perverse behaviour that they no longer belong to the unique Shepherd. And if, besides, they want to maintain that they still belong, which they usually do, sentence is pronounced on them by the divine Shepherd himself. He cuts them off from the

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number of his sheep, because they have cut themselves off from his fold and he admits no more to being their Shepherd. There will be one fold and one Shepherd. Sentence has been pronounced; woe to whoever remains obdurate.

The phrase, 'and one shepherd', is also in contrast to what obtained in the time of the old law. Fundamentally there was only one Shepherd, who was our Lord, for he said, 'no one comes to the Father except through me' (Jn 14:6). As a result, there could be no true shepherd but he. Besides he has spoken sufficiently about that truth in the present chapter. But in the minds of the Jews there was more than one shepherd as there was more than one fold. They looked on the prophets to whom God gave different laws as shepherds. Thus Moses was the shepherd of the Jews, that is to say, of all the house of Israel under the law. The gentiles who served God were not obliged to follow the law and yet were sheep according to the Jews themselves, who called them children of Noah. They named Noah as their shepherd. The Jews then were children of Abraham and Moses receiving the faith and practices prescribed to Abraham and Moses, and the gentiles children of Noah, receiving and observing only the laws prescribed to Noah. These denominations still exist, even now, in their books. But in the new law and the new fold these distinctions will no longer exist, nor these different branches. All will be directly and without distinction our Lord's sheep. They will receive from him immediately, directly and uniquely the interior guidance of grace as well as his life. So, in this new fold, there will be only one Shepherd, and he alone will rule all his own flock.

17. *Propterea me diligit Pater, quia ego  
pono animam meam, ut iterum sumam  
eam.*

17. *For this reason the Father loves  
me, because I lay down my life,  
that I may take it again.*

Our Lord speaks here of love based on merit. The Father loved the Son essentially from all eternity. Because he was his well-beloved Son he loved him with a love given freely and with delight; it was not because he gave his life that his Father loved

him, it was because he was his beloved Son. But the love here is of grace and merit, based on accomplishing the divine will perfectly in love. Our divine Shepherd, having shown how superior is his pastoral activity to that of the false shepherds, or rather how it is the only genuine pastoral activity, now indicates his reward. It is his Father's love. He has shown his pastoral care of his sheep, now he shows it as it touches his Father. Once again he compares himself with the false shepherds and shows that he alone is loved by his Father. 'For this reason the Father loves me'. That is why I am loved by the Father, 'because I lay down', and so on, because I alone give up my life.

The words, 'he loves me because I lay down', make it clear that he draws a comparison: he is loved, not the others. Why does his Father love him? Because he lays down his life to take it up again. The supreme mark of love is to give one's life for one's friends. This is the perfection of all love and those who give their lives for God love God perfectly. Our Lord, conforming to his Father's will, gave his life for his sheep, purely and simply out of love for God and without being constrained to it by that will. In this way he showed as Son of God that his action was supremely perfect.

Perfection in any action is twofold: that inhering in the action and that in the attitude that accompanies it. Now our Lord's attitude was infinitely perfect and of infinite merit, while the action he speaks of here was most perfect in itself. This explains how it wins the Father's love. 'That I may take it up again'. The perfection of any heroic act does not lie in the act itself but in how it accomplishes God's will and good pleasure. Therefore, in order to be perfect it must conform totally to that holy will. In this instance the Father's will was not for our Lord simply to die and remain with the dead until after the general resurrection but to rise again after some time. The Father's love was attached not to the Son's deed of giving his life but to the deed of giving it with intent to take it up again.

A further reason is that his resurrection was also for the good of the sheep and the salvation of souls no less than was the mystery

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of his death. And so it attracted the Father's special love. The phrases, 'I lay down' and 'I take up', declare the Son of God's power, sole source of these actions; they also indicate the free will with which the Son of God operated, as he will explain in the following verse. The words 'lay down' indicate place. Our Lord laid down his life. Where? Into his Father's hands, as he will say on the point of dying, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit' (Lk 23:46). These words were an act of power proclaimed with great strength; by them he committed his life into his Father's hands.

18. *Nemo tollit eam a meipso  
et potestatem habeo  
ponendi eam; et potestatem habeo  
iterum sumendi eam; hoc mandatum  
accepi a Patre meo.*<sup>1</sup>

18. *No one takes it from me, but I  
lay it down of my own accord. I  
have power to lay it down, and  
I have power to take it again;  
this charge I have received from  
my Father."*

Our Lord explains in this verse why he lays down his life and takes it up again. To all appearances it would seem that his enemies snatched his life from him and that he died from their torture. These appearances are wrong. He gave up his life to his Father by a simple act of will when everything was accomplished that had to be accomplished and carried out in his person. He made this quite clear in his last moments. After taking the vinegar he said, 'all is finished'. Then he raised his voice forcefully and said to his Father, 'into your hands...' He was saying: Everything is complete; I have done all you asked; now I give you my life, I lay it into your hands. 'And I have power'. Our Lord makes it clear that he dies of his own power and rises of his own power. 'I have power'. He has it within him, it inheres in his nature. He says: 'I lay down, I take up, my life; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up'. He speaks of laying down his life and taking it up, like laying down and taking up an object that is not his.

1. The words '... sed ego pono eam a meipso...' are missing from the French edition. They have been supplied here from the Latin Vulgate edition.



Who will lay down his life and who will take it up? Is it the soul? The words do not say that; besides, the soul cannot take itself up, nor go outside itself in order to be obliged to take itself up again later on. Is it the body? But the body cannot have power over the soul – in our Lord less than in anyone else, because in his sacred humanity everything was in perfect order and the body obeyed the soul according to the primeval order of creation. Now if the body had had the power to lay down and take up the soul, disorder would have ensued. Who then has this power? It is the divine Word in person, who says: 'I lay it down of my own accord... no one takes it from me, and I have power'. When his Father's eternal wishes were accomplished in his sacred humanity, then the Word laid down his life, not outside himself but outside his body. He did this with the perfect consent of his human mind and will and with the perfect docility and submission of his body.

For this reason, at the moment the great act was being carried out, the adorable humanity bent its head: 'He bowed his head and expired' (cf Jn 19:30; Mk 15:37). This gesture indicated the perfect agreement and consent of his body, soul and divinity in this wonderful separation (of corporal and spiritual realities - ed.)

Throughout the whole period of separation the Word remained united as before with his body and his soul, in such a way that his body and soul remained united together through the supernatural bond that the Holy Spirit brought about by the hypostatic union of the Word. The Word being thus substantially united with the body and the soul, it follows that this adorable body and soul were united in the divine substance of the Word. This substance, essentially one and indivisible, was united with both body and soul. This divine substance of the Word held body and soul together.

Nevertheless, there must be no slipping into the gross error of thinking that this means it was impossible for the Lord's body to die. That would be a major mistake and even a heresy. His body remained dead for three days, dead and motionless, like any human body deprived of its soul. But, dead though it was, it

merited the adoration of the angels and saints because the divine Word was in it just as before. In what then consisted this separation of body and soul, if both were still united in the unity of the Word? It consisted in a separation according to nature. Two points are to be noted in our divine Lord: first, his supernatural existence which stemmed from his union with the divine Person of the Word; secondly, his natural existence, which consisted in the relationship of his body and soul. His body and soul were created absolutely like ours, except to a degree inexpressibly purer and more perfect. Both had the same nature and qualities as we received from the hand of God at our first creation, without what sin added to that creation. The only difference was that his bodily and spiritual qualities were incomparably and incomprehensibly more perfect than ours.

In the act of creating us, God joined soul to body and established certain relationships between them. There is a unity and relationship whereby the body receives natural life and movement from the soul: this makes the living person. When this natural unity and these relationships between body and soul break up, then we say: this person is dead. The word death indicates natural separation, rupture of the natural relationship of soul to body, to which it should give life and movement. In laying down his life, the divine Word removed from both his soul and body their natural unity and interaction, so that the body no longer received life and movement from the soul. As a consequence, our Lord truly died and was truly buried, all the while remaining perfectly united to the divine Word. This means that his body and soul remained immediately united in the divine substance of the Word. As a result of the perfect unity he maintained with his body, our Lord said truthfully: 'I have power to lay it down and... to take it up'. Yet the divine word remained as much united to his soul as to his body while, at the same time, separating the soul from the body. Our Lord placed his soul outside his body, as it were, in a state of separation from his body. Later he united soul and body once more and restored relationships between them. This

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happened in his resurrection when Our Lord resumed his soul into his body.

‘This charge I have received from my Father’. Our Lord now gives the real reason he had to do these things: it was not because the Jews crucified him or made him suffer awful torments but because he had received the order from his Father. It was his Father’s will, determined from all eternity, that his beloved Son should be allowed to die on the cross for the sins of all people and rise again for their justification. His adorable Son was to carry out in time his Father’s eternal will. The Father’s will can be considered from two points of view: first, as given to his Son, eternal like himself and from all eternity. In this way it is not a superior’s decision passed on to an inferior; rather since the divine will is in the Father, he begot it in his Son, who possessed from all eternity that same will with his Father’s divine being, which was also his. Secondly, we can look on it as a decision of the Father’s good pleasure given to the Son in his sacred humanity. In his sacred humanity, in perfect understanding and accord with the Word, he surrendered and submitted entirely to his Father’s divine will and hastened with all the strength of his will to accomplish it even though he could have chosen the pleasure and happiness he possessed from the Word’s divine essence. ‘For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross’ (Heb 12:2). His Father’s will was not only for his death but for his resurrection as well. The Son of God fulfilled both.

19. *Dissensio iterum facta est inter  
Judaeos propter sermones hos.*

19. *There was again a division  
among the Jews because of these  
words.*

On the occasion of these words, in themselves calm and consoling, Jesus gave rise to a dispute and dissension once again among the Jews, as on the occasion of those earlier words that proclaimed a teaching equally lofty and consoling (Chapter 7). None of those who heard them could understand. Only the well disposed by a modicum of faith experienced great consolation and a touch of grace that moved and drew them closer to the Lord. The

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badly disposed, on the contrary, found matter for scandal. In their sense of loss they became ever more hardened. This dissension put an end to our divine Master's discourses, which never take place in a time of agitation, as we said earlier (Chapter 7).

20. *Dicebant autem multi ex ipsis:  
Daemonium habet et insanit;  
Quid eum auditis?*

20. *Many of them said, "He has a  
demon, and he is mad; why  
listen to him?"*

Badly disposed people tend to blaspheme what they do not know. These people did not understand our Lord's divine words; not content to say that the words were obscure, they blasphemed and said that he who spoke thus spoke under the demon's inspiration and was out of his senses. Yet in all his words he had always used superhuman wisdom. It had often happened that his listeners did not understand well, and yet they discerned a wisdom higher than themselves. They had often heard our Lord speak in parables and they came to believe the words were parabolic, containing a hidden meaning beyond their grasp. Furthermore, they had always seen by experience that no one was ever able to resist the supreme wisdom that spoke through our Lord's lips or embarrass him in anything. But instead of acknowledging his superiority and acknowledging a hidden wisdom in words they found inscrutable, they preferred to follow the bent of their passion and decide forthwith that the words were meaningless, against all reason.

They said, 'he has a demon'. When the Son of man spoke to people, divine inspiration – or rather the substantial presence of the Word – made itself felt in all the actions carried out in his humanity, which in everything was like to that of other human beings. When people wish to communicate something they have thought of, something they feel and experience in their souls, they must communicate it by the senses. Through the senses they touch their fellow human beings, whose senses receive the message, which in turn enters their souls. 'Faith comes from hearing' (Rom 10:17).

Consummate eloquence consists in this that each of the senses of those who want to communicate what they experience are involved, are taken over by it and express it, each sense in its own way. Because of that they impress all the senses of the listeners, captivating them more or less until they have perfectly received the message. This explains why people who are vividly and strongly gripped by something explain it more eloquently, because all their senses are imbued with it. People inspired by the Spirit of God, who therefore feel more strongly about things, more sensitively and intimately, communicate in this way. They perform more perfectly than people whose opinion is only based on natural strength, for the effects produced by nature are incomparably feebler than those produced by grace, especially in people extraordinarily inspired. This also explains why people who are inspired by the Holy Spirit and enlivened by grace produce marvellous graces in others.

Our Saviour's humanity acted likewise to make known the divine teachings it received from the Word, which are beyond all words, once the Father decided to have them made known. The Son of God passed on these wonderful messages through the senses of his humanity, which in due course made publicly known the truths communicated by the divine Word. It did this through all the senses that had been touched, in such a way that the incomprehensible mystery of the divine unity of the Word was communicated more powerfully.

Moreover, for certain higher, more important truths the Son of God showed more clearly the wonderful outpouring of the divine essence on his sacred humanity, as, for instance, the words, 'he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit', (Lk10:217) indicate, and other similar phrases. The Jews saw these effects but, being badly disposed, they understood them perversely and said they all came from the devil. So they often said, 'he has a devil'. This issued from their malice, repulsed by the manifestation of the divinity that condemned this malice, and so their ill-will grew apace. Good people, on the contrary, were enveloped in the overflowing of

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God's Spirit on our Saviour's activity and experienced the healthy fruits of his grace.

21. *Alii dicebant: Haec verba non sunt  
daemonium habentis: numquid  
daemonium potest caecorum  
oculos aperire?*

21. *Others said, "These are not the  
sayings of one who has a  
demon. Can a demon open the  
eyes of the blind?"*

The good were those among the Jews who were not badly disposed towards our Lord; they followed the call of their hearts rather than the pride of their minds. No more than the others did they understand our Saviour's divine words but, since they were touched by grace and favourably disposed, they maintained a certain uprightness of mind that the others had lost through their malice. Although they did not understand the words they concluded from the foregoing that it was God and not a demon acting in our Lord. So they said two things. First, his words are not those of a person possessed by a demon; the good results they produce and the way they are said, as well as the very nature of the words, proclaim quite clearly that they do not stem from the devil. In the second place they said that our Lord could not be speaking by the devil's inspirations since a demon cannot open the eyes of someone born blind. Consequently the great miracle that our Lord had just worked was from God, and they recognised that our Lord was moved by God in his good works. Now it is impossible for both God and the devil to be the principle of a soul's activity of this kind: God does not work miracles through someone who speaks and acts by inspiration of the devil.

### Jesus the Son of God

22. *Facta sunt autem Encaenia in  
Jerosolymis: et hiems erat;*

22. *It was the feast of the Dedication  
at Jerusalem;*

23. *Et ambulabat Jesus in templo in  
porticu Solomonis.*

23. *it was winter, and Jesus was  
walking in the temple, in the  
portico of Solomon.*



Since our Lord never abides where there is agitation, he left the Jews as soon as they disputed with him. It was winter time, when the Jews made bonfires to celebrate the restoration and dedication of the temple that took place in the time of the Maccabees. Our Lord always took great pleasure in noting whatever was done for his Father's glory or in thanksgiving for his benefits. In all these circumstances he honoured by his presence the feasts the people celebrated to give homage to his Father. This explains why, on leaving the Jews, he went to the temple. The biggest bonfire was probably in Solomon's portico. There may be some other reason unknown to us that Jesus went there. Possibly in winter time the people gathered in the portico rather than elsewhere, and the divine Saviour showed himself at these solemnities to the people to proclaim his new kingdom. The two circumstances the Holy Spirit mentions here, 'it was winter' and 'in Solomon's portico', probably have special and more exalted reasons.

24. *Circumdederunt ergo eum Judaei et dicebant ei: Quousque animam nostram tollis? Si tu es Christus, dic nobis palam.*

24. *So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

The Jews heard divine Wisdom speaking all the time without understanding a thing that fell from his lips. They were probably the same ones who heard him say, 'I am the good Shepherd' and other wonderful things, without knowing what he said. It even seems certain that their question was related to this point, for the Saviour's answer follows on from the first verses of this chapter. They had just said, 'he has a devil and is out of his senses', for those speaking to him here were faithless evil people. And yet, although by their words they taxed him with foolishness, in their conscience they felt this was not so. They suspected that he might mean to say in this way he was the Messiah, so they all came to hear him and ask him to say clearly he was the Messiah. After they had debated together, some must have been uncertain and stung with remorse, but their defective faith and bad dispositions

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prevented them from seeking clarification; once again they twisted the answers of divine Wisdom.

Amidst incertitude and remorse they put this question: 'How long are you going to hold our souls in suspense? If you are the Messiah, say so openly, and not constantly in puzzles and parables.' Put in that way, the question did not deserve an answer. They came complaining badhumouredly. The motivation of the unusual request was self-love, they did not want to remain uncertain. Another noteworthy point is that they did not ask to know our Lord genuinely. They wanted to know if he was the Messiah, a Messiah fashioned according to their human ideas. Moreover, their minuscule faith left them incapable even of this knowledge, as is quite clear at the end of our Lord's answer. Many of them were hardened in their incredulity and put the question only to have a pretext for taking action against him. Caiaphas' question, his motivation is behind it.

25. *Respondit eis Jesus: Loquor vobis, et non creditis. Opera quae ego facio in nomine Patris mei, haec testimonium perhibent de me.*

25. *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me;*

In his answer our Lord adverted to their incredulity, which explained why they failed to understand his words and why he could not enlarge on his answer. They asked him to say if he was the Christ, (the anointed one, ed.) whereas he had said so many times but, because of their bad dispositions, they had never understood. On the occasions they did understand, they wanted to kill him for it, for the name Christ *par excellence* they gave to the great personage they awaited. He had been foretold by all the prophets and his name meant no less than the divine anointing of the humanity (of Jesus) by the divine word (to whom it was linked in the Incarnation, ed). It follows that the Christ was the same as the Son of God.

Now our Lord had told them again and again that he was Son

of God, and yet they were never ready to accept him as such. Furthermore, he had shown them many times the two natures that were in him, calling himself sometimes Son of God and making himself equal to God and sometimes Son of man and showing his inferiority. Their misfortune was that they had lost the genuine notion of the Messiah and entertained ideas of him quite different from what he really was. It meant they could not grasp our Lord's meaning.

To overcome this obstacle would have required more docility and better dispositions of faith in them so that they could be disabused gradually of their wrong ideas. On the contrary, they were tenacious of their ideas; whenever the divine Messiah uttered truths opposed to their thinking they were dissatisfied and complained. As soon as our Lord used a word that showed he was greater than other human beings, then, instead of giving in and seeking the light, they rebelled against him. They simply had no faith in him and his words. For example, when he set himself above Abraham and the prophets they said, 'Whom do you make yourself?' When he said he was before Abraham they wanted to stone him. They wanted him to be the Messiah but they did not want him to be what he proclaimed himself to be by the reality of his personality since they wanted a Messiah after their own ideas and not otherwise. Had they begun to believe the great fundamental truth of our Lord's divinity all their errors would have disappeared.

This was our Lord's answer. He showed that their uncertainty came from their unbelief and had no other cause. They could have said they were unable to confess him as Son of God since they only saw in him a human being like others, as they said on one occasion: 'You, who are a man, make yourself God' (Jn 10:33); so their lack of faith would have appeared justified. That was why our Lord said that the works he did as Son of God proved the truth of what he spoke. He said he was Son of God and in that capacity he worked great miracles. The miracles proved he really was what he said, since he could not do these works without God's power.

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And how could God put all that power into his hands to authorise a lie?

He said, 'the works which I do in my Father's name'. The Jews then had no further reasons to adduce to justify their unbelief or to demonstrate that if they did not know him it was not their fault. Our Lord did not say, I have told you who I am, the Messiah, the Son of God, and you do not want to believe me; but he said, 'I speak to you and you do not want to believe me'. In point of fact he had never explicitly said he was the Messiah; this was because of their unbelief. He said, 'I speak', in general.

26. *Sed vos non creditis, quia non estis ex ovibus meis.*

26. *but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.*

After our Lord had removed the only excuse for their unbelief through the proof of his miracles, he now showed them the real base of their unbelief. If they did not believe he was God and Son of God the Father, this was not through any good intentions of fearing to offend God by adoring a human being – as they pretended, fabricating pretexts for persecuting him – but stemmed from the fact that they were not numbered among his sheep; they had not his sheep's feelings and attitudes towards him, so they did not believe him or understand what he said.

27. *Oves meae vocem meam audiunt: et ego cognosco eas, et sequuntur me,*

27. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;*

His sheep hear his voice. Love for their shepherd draws their affection towards him, making them always favourably disposed. But those who are not of his sheep, who have not these dispositions, look on him as an outsider. They have no taste for the nourishment he provides, all their affection goes on things other than the divine Shepherd, opposed to him. Moreover, the source of openness and docility in the true sheep is the Holy Spirit within them, as well as his divine grace drawing them on and inclining them towards their Shepherd, opening their understanding to

relish joyfully all that comes from their Shepherd. Meanwhile, those who are not sheep have the spirit of the devil and the flesh, they never stop opposing the divine Shepherd and keep on doing the contrary to what the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the sheep.

It was for these reasons, and all the others given in detail earlier in this same chapter, that the Jews did not have faith. 'And I know mine and they follow me'. The divine Shepherd knows his sheep in the way explained above. Through this knowledge he draws them constantly to him, and they follow just as constantly letting themselves be drawn spiritually by the divine Shepherd. They are fully docile to his leading and to the interior attraction of grace until the end of their lives. 'And I know mine'. Our Lord knows them, for they are sheep only by the eternal determination of the Father, who willed them so. As a result of this general determination that placed them in the number of our Lord's sheep, the Father planned particular graces for them from all eternity. In each generation these graces would ensure and preserve this characteristic of being his sheep. Our Lord was fully aware of this eternal will of his Father and was charged with carrying it out in history in each of the sheep in each moment and circumstance determined by that divine eternal will of the Father. It follows that he knows all his sheep and this in a practical way in order to effect what was determined from all eternity. As a consequence of this knowledge the sheep follow him.

28. *Et ego vitam aeternam do eis;  
et non peribunt in aeternum, et non  
rapiet eas quisquam de manu mea.*

28. *and I give them eternal life, and  
they shall never perish, and no one  
shall snatch them out of my hand.*

Before explaining this verse we must go back to the two previous ones. There is a problem. Our Lord is clearly speaking to his elect, whom his Father has given him; these he calls his sheep. He tells the Pharisees they are not his sheep and do not hear his voice, the voice that his sheep hear. Now certainly many people who had heard his voice and had been within the sheepfold were afterwards lost and did not enter the kingdom of heaven. The

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problem is a false one. Truth always issues from the lips of divine Wisdom, it is only that occasionally we happen not to understand it. Our own ignorance and sin are at fault. We must simply adore in faith and love what we do not know sufficiently because of the darkness of our minds. The Master's words in this context do make sense.

As relating to our divine Shepherd we may divide people into four classes: 1) The elect, who hear from the outset and remain faithful all their lives, like the apostle St John. 2) Those who do not hear at first but come to hear and be faithful, like St Paul. 3) Those who hear and are faithful at first but become faithless later, like Judas. 4) Those who never hear and remain always in their lack of faith. It is to these our Lord speaks at this point. As for those who begin faithfully and then fall, only to return like the apostle St Peter, or those who after their return, fall again and finish badly, like Simon Magus, they fit into one of the four groups mentioned. The first two classes are certainly the sheep, the second two are not.

We come back now to our Lord's words. He says to those who were to remain in their hardness: you do not believe because you are not of my sheep, that is to say, you are not of those whom my Father has given me, who belong to me; that is the fundamental reason you do not listen to me. One certain thing is that when the moment determined by the Father for the conversion of a soul has arrived, and the grace of conversion has been offered, and that soul is not converted, then it is not numbered among the sheep, that is, the elect. 'All those who are his sheep', according to our Lord's phrase, that is, all whom his Father has given him to be his chosen ones, always listen to their Shepherd's voice once the moment determined by the Father arrives and, as a consequence of this eternal decree, the divine Shepherd comes to gather them in. Thus if someone does not listen at one of these decisive moments, this means he is not one of the flock. It sometimes happens that a soul does not listen at first, then rallies later and becomes truly a member of the flock. If he did not listen at first

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then it means that the time determined for doing so, the decisive moment laid down by the Father's eternal decrees, has not arrived. On the other hand, if he rallies later, sometimes to a lesser call, that is, in circumstances less auspicious than earlier, it means that at that point the moment fixed in the eternal decrees has arrived.

But it must be observed that for someone to listen at the outset and continue faithful for some time does not prove he is among the genuine sheep. The divine master well says that a mark of his sheep is to listen to him. One may conclude that in order to be his sheep one must listen. But not all those who listen are genuine; it often turns out that they are outsiders who find themselves in the fold of the great shepherd but will withdraw later and be lost. They entered into the sheepfold by grace of the divine shepherd and by the altogether great mercy of his Father, who predestined those graces for them, arranged their entry into and their stay in his beloved Son's sheepfold, but without giving them to his Son.

A moment would come when those sheep would turn out to be unfaithful to his advances and, of their own fault and to their loss, would leave the sheepfold. Their malice and wickedness would resist great graces and favours. Since the Father had not given them to his Son, this beloved Son ever faithful to his Father allows them to perish. He does not give them more graces than his Father had determined. And the Father, adorable in his judgments, did not wish to increase their grace according to the greater need of their malice and wickedness.

Perseverance is what constitutes the determining, distinctive mark of the sheep. When our Lord said, 'my sheep hear my voice', he added, 'and I know my sheep'. He discerns and distinguishes as true sheep those who listen. By this knowledge he applies to them there and then and in the same circumstance the graces determined by his Father, whether for their conversion or for their perseverance. Then he added, 'and they follow me'. They follow him: that is perseverance. The Shepherd gives his graces uninterruptedly and a sheep follows him uninterruptedly and is

faithful to the end. Some true sheep are faithful at first, fall away and come back. We cannot know the decisive moment in the Father's eternal determination nor the last time they will come back. The Shepherd then gives his graces and they follow him to the end.

The genuine sheep will receive what the eternal Shepherd promises at this point. He will give them eternal life by communicating his life even in this world. This life within them will endure, it will never leave them, because they will always follow their Shepherd, who will not cease giving them life. Thus, eternal predestination to be sheep of the good Shepherd comes first; then the present grace to draw them to the sheepfold, to which corresponds their fidelity in listening to the voice of the Shepherd calling. 'They hear my voice'. Then comes the loving care of the shepherd for those he acknowledges as his sheep, and to that corresponds fidelity in following him with the grace of perseverance. Continual graces are attached to that fidelity. To the extent that a soul perseveres in fidelity, to that extent it guarantees its final perseverance. Our Lord calls eternal life – which he gives in this world – that life begun in this world which will have no end, this life of God whose fullness is found in the Shepherd.

In giving it to the faithful sheep the Shepherd makes it their own, it will be theirs for all eternity. But eternal life is not in those souls that come to him, are faithful for a while and then abandon him. The life of God that they receive by the passing grace given to them is not their property in God's eyes. God sees that it will be taken away from them later through their own fault; he gives it to them as to others for as long as they will be faithful. Since they will not always be faithful this life does not belong to them forever – for them it is not eternal. It is not a perfect gift but more like a loan.

On the same principle, those who persevere in their fidelity will keep this life for all eternity. Our Lord correctly says of them, 'I give them'. Note that he says, 'I give them', in the present, that is to say, he gives as soon as they become genuine sheep. He adds, 'and they will not perish forever'. He shows thus that they will not

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be lost for eternity. Here the verb is in the future because the point is about another life. These souls, then, will not be lost for eternity. But those who do not listen, and those who turn back after having listened, will perish. They are not his sheep and he does not take responsibility for preserving them from the evil that will come upon them. Our Lord goes further. 'And no one will take them from my hand'. This says two things. First, it adds to what he has just said. Not only will they not perish for all eternity, but they will not even have a passing lapse that would separate them from him.

For it must be noted that our divine Shepherd speaks here of those who follow him, that is, those who receive the grace of perseverance and are faithful to it. The true status of being a sheep of the heavenly Shepherd only exists, in practice, after reception of this grace of perseverance. After a period of faithfulness a soul may fall, only to rise again and persevere. Its first fidelity cannot be compared to that of genuine sheep but to that of faithful souls who perish later; their grace of fidelity was not the grace that demands perseverance. The decisive moment when God's perfect plans of mercy are accomplished occurs, when the grace of perseverance is granted never more to be interrupted. That is why the divine Shepherd says that no one will take them away from him. All the powers of earth and hell may join forces against God's cherished souls; they will prove incapable of snatching them from their guiding shepherd's hand. This is the second point he wishes to make by the words, 'and no one shall snatch them...' He alone has received power for that and he will defend us against every hostile power. 'Hand' indicates the strength he has to defend us. Inasmuch as the sheep are his possession they are in his hand, his all-powerful hand, from which nobody will ever snatch them. Our Lord simply states the fact: it will never happen. He gives the reason in the following verses.

We see how indebted we are to our adorable Shepherd. He watches over those who belong to him and he defends them with his all-powerful hand. We see, further, how confident we can be as long as we are faithful, for he is our defender. We see our duty to

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return to him when we have been unfaithful, for in him alone is our strength and support. All of us should be fully confident that we are numbered among his sheep. We must believe accordingly, following him with persevering fidelity, always maintaining dispositions of true sheep towards him. People who may be assailed by temptations of fear and distrust should amply arm themselves with generous love, forget themselves and try to love the divine Shepherd, remaining docile and loyal to him while they are in the sheepfold. They need not strain to find out whether they are there as the divine Shepherd's property or as outsiders.

29. *Pater meus quod dedit mihi,  
majus omnibus est, et nemo potest  
rapere de manu Patris mei.*

29. *My Father, who has given them  
to me, is greater than all, and  
no one is able to snatch them  
out of the Father's hand.*

Throughout this chapter when our Lord speaks of his role as Shepherd he speaks of the Son of man. We have been given to the sacred humanity, it nourishes us and communicates grace to us, with it we are always in relationship, it defends us against every powerful enemy. The Word gives us everything through his humanity, this humanity will recompense us in the other life, as was fully explained in chapter five.

30. *Ego et Pater unum sumus.*

30. *I and the Father are one."*

Consequently (in) all that our Lord says on this occasion the sacred humanity speaks. The Jews were unbelieving because they were not his sheep. That is why, having said no one would take his sheep away from him, he gives the reason now. What my Father has given me is greater than all that exists. And what did the Father give the Son of man that is so great? It was his Word and he gave it to him to the extent that this venerable humanity constitutes one Person with the Word. To take anything from it is to take from the Word. If he protects a sheep, not only is it the humanity but the Word that protects it.

In order to explain further and at the same time make his union with the Word stand out more clearly, he adds: 'And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand'. Everyone must admit this truth. Now certainly anyone snatching a sheep from the adorable Shepherd's hand would be forcefully snatching it from the Father's hand. Our Lord explains this by saying, 'I and the Father are one'. The Word possesses in himself the essence, nature and whole substance of the Father; this human nature possesses in itself the substance of the Word most perfectly. It follows that the sacred humanity, being one with the Word, is thereby one with the Father and has all the Father's power. The terms 'one' and 'we are', indicate perfect union. Father and Son are one and the same being, they have one and the same existence.

31. *Sustulerunt ergo lapides Judaei,  
ut lapidarent eum.*

31. *The Jews took up stones again  
to stone him.*

The Jews' response was to take up stones in order to stone him who said such divine things. Their wickedness was so bad that they would not converse with him but got hold of instruments of torture immediately to use on him. Thus they clearly showed the truth of the divine words our Lord had just addressed them.

32. *Respondit eis Jesus: Multa bona  
opera ostendi vobis ex Patre meo,  
propter quod eorum opus me  
lapidatis?*

32. *Jesus answered them, "I have  
shown you many good works  
from the Father; for which of  
these do you stone me?"*

The Jews wanted to stone our Lord for making himself equal to God, in accordance with the law that laid down this punishment against blasphemers. Now if he was to be stoned for that he should have been stoned for all the miracles he worked for the people's good, since he always performed all these miracles as Son of God and in his Father's name. And if he did not deserve to be stoned for the miraculous works neither did he deserve it for saying, 'I and the Father are one'. They are equally blasphemous.

Now our Lord knew well that the Jews could not condemn his miracles. Because clearly they came from God, they would not have dared to deny the evidence before the people. That is why he says, for which of my good works do you wish to stone me? I did these works plentifully in my Father's name. And if you cannot stone me for these works neither can you stone me for the same word, which I say to you without doing a work. At the same time it was a reproach for their ingratitude. They wanted to stone an excellent benefactor, who strewed his way with good deeds full of power and love.

33. *Responderunt ei Judaei: De bono opere non lapidamus te sed de blasphemia, et quia tu, homo cum sis, facis teipsum Deum.*

33. *The Jews answered him, "We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God."*

The unfortunate people condemn themselves by their reply: they are not stoning him for good works but for blasphemy. But if the good works are true there cannot be blasphemy. They reproach him with two things, for which they want to stone him: (for) blasphemy against God, making himself equal to him, and for idolatry, wishing himself to be adored even though he is only a human being.

34. *Respondit eis Jesus: Nonne scriptum est in lege vestra: Quia ego dixi, dii estis?*

34. *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?"*

These words are from psalms addressed to the wicked. God says to them: I said (when you were still good) that you would all be gods and children of the most High (Ps 81:6). He was speaking to the perverted Jews about his good plans for them when he gave them his law. From this our Lord drew proof against them. Note the Saviour's wonderful goodness. He spoke to convince them, to get them to desert their evil plan and return to less wicked sentiments, by drawing a proof in his favour from their very law. But these people were so bad that they gained nothing even from



this circumstance and he had to act in the strength of his divinity to prevent them from perpetrating evil.

35. *Si illos dixit deos ad quos sermo Dei factus est, et non potest solvi scriptura:*

35. *If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken),*

36. *Quem Pater sanctificavit, et misit in mundum, vos dicitis: Quia blasphemias; quia dixi, Filius Dei sum?*

36. *do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming', because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?*

Scripture calls gods those who receive from the divinity only a secondary and imperfect share and receive it only from our Lord and through adoption. With how much more reason is not our Lord himself, who receives a share of the divinity that is direct, immediate and perfect, a share he is to communicate to human beings so that they too can be gods through him, with how much more reason is he called God. It follows he is not blaspheming when he calls himself Son of God.

'If he called them gods to whom the word of God came': the word of God is the word our Lord gives (to human beings) to hand on to them the divine perfections and make them sharers in the divinity. The term 'word' means either (one that is) interior either through grace or exterior i.e. the word of faith that is spoken to produce grace. 'Came': this word is spoken. It is not the substance itself of the divinity but an imperfect, created expression of the divine. Grace, then, is not the substance of the divinity but a created gift that enables people to share in the divinity as much as a human being can do so on earth. 'To whom': this indicates the manner in which this communication is made: it is something that comes from outside them, indirectly, through our Lord's sacred humanity. And yet Scripture calls them gods because they really share in the divinity that dwells in them, however imperfectly.

'And Scripture cannot be broken'. What is explicit in Scripture cannot be undone or contradicted. 'Whom the Father

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consecrated'. Now our Lord shows forth in himself everything he showed forth in those faithful souls whom he called gods, and that in an incomparably more perfect way – he whom the Father sanctified directly by himself, taking him into his eternal bosom. For the sacred humanity was taken into the Father's bosom through his personal union with the Word, thereby making only one and the same thing with the Word. The divine Word remained always in the Father's bosom. There it was sanctified, possessing the Father's own holiness.

'And he sent into the world'. This phrase shows that the Son of man is in the Father's bosom and that the words, 'whom the Father consecrated', mean that he sanctified him by taking him into his bosom; only after that did he send him into the world. The idea that the Father sends him into the world supposes a preceding idea, (namely) that he had him in his bosom. The Father sent him into the world; this means that he charged him to sanctify the world. He sent him into the world so that the world should receive of his abundance, imperfectly yet nevertheless richly. He sent him into the world to communicate the divinity, of which he possessed the fulness, to those called to be gods. 'And you say' and so on. Thus the Jews were in gross error and in bad faith to say it was blasphemy for this adorable personage to call himself Son of God.

37. *Si non facio opera Patris mei,  
nolite credere mihi.*

37. *If I am not doing the works of my  
Father, then do not believe me;*

38. *Si autem facio, et si mihi non  
vultis credere, operibus credite  
ut cognoscatis, et credatis  
quia Pater in me est, et ego in  
Patre.*

38. *but if I do them, even though  
you do not believe me, believe  
the works, that you may know  
and understand that the Father  
is in me and I am in the Father."*

Where does the greatness of the error on the part of the Jewish leaders come from? From their malice, which would not allow them to believe in our Lord's divine Word. So the divine Master

repeats once again the convincing reason he had given many times already, that is to say, the proof of his miracles. But in order to understand properly all our Lord's words here it must be remembered that someone who is outside the sheepfold may enter it in two ways. In the first way grace precedes knowledge. Our Lord draws the soul to himself and imprints interiorly within it a grace of faith in all his words, without the soul's understanding anything. The soul is faithful to this grace; unresisting, it turns towards everything that comes from our Lord without first wanting to understand the things it believes. It is not through the convincing proofs of our Lord's divinity and the truthfulness of his words that it believes in our Lord and his words. The soul believes purely and simply through the movement of grace and our Lord gives it interior lights and understanding of the object of faith. This understanding is much more perfect, heartfelt and convincing than one soul would acquire by itself.

The second way is where God uses reason to convince a soul and lead it to the divine sheepfold. Reasoning, stimulated nevertheless by divine grace, produces conversion and leads to faith. One begins by reasoning about objects and when one finds truth by the help of grace one adopts it by another grace. This second way is less perfect than the first, because the more grace there is in the supernatural workings of our soul, the more perfect are these workings, and the more influence of our nature and intellectual or sense powers, the less perfect is the working of grace. This is because all the perfection and merit of our actions are drawn from grace, they are God's gifts and our Lord's merits rewarded in us. 'Crowning our merits you crown your gifts', says the Church in a eucharistic preface (Preface of Saints). Consequently, the greater or lesser degree of Christ's merit that is granted decides the degree of perfection achieved by the good works we carry out.

The only thing absolutely necessary is for our soul to cooperate with grace and draw into itself this merit and gift of God, allowing it to triumph within. It establishes itself in our

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hearts and becomes the living source of our endeavours. Hence, the more perfect our cooperation the more merit our soul has before God, for the more perfect our cooperation the more grace extends and triumphs in our heart and the more also it becomes the life and soul of all our deeds. On the other hand, without our cooperation grace remains dead in us or at least inactive and all our deeds are our own, independent of grace and consequently empty of our Lord's merit.

But let us come back to our text. This then is what our Lord's words mean. The Pharisees would not believe him so he said, 'If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me'. Our Lord called himself Son of God, but in doing so he performed his Father's works; this clearly proved he was indeed Son of God and his Father was in him. Had he not done these works the Pharisees might not have believed for they would not have received that supreme grace which draws people towards our Lord by a special infusion and creates an attraction independently of the workings of our understanding. If they had not received this grace, their reason would have told them it was only a man speaking and not the Son of God. In that case they would not have been culpable in their unbelief because with ordinary grace they could not have come to the truth and would have been obliged to follow the lights of their reason.

Nonetheless there would still have been serious grounds for believing the assurance our Lord gave that he was Son of God. On the other hand in such a weighty affair that might not have been sufficient to induce faith. Indeed they could still have been obliged not to believe. On the other hand our Lord did many miracles to prove the truth of what he was advancing, miracles that were clearly his Father's works, and he did them with an extraordinary power that undoubtedly lay within himself. This was the most cogent proof to convince anyone's mind of the truth of his divine words and to lead to the greatest certitude. However, the grace needed for helping reason to come to faith is never wanting. It follows that the Jews had no excuse for not believing in Jesus at

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least in this second manner (based on his miracles). This is what our Lord means when he says: since I do these works, if you do not want to 'believe in me', and so on. The first way of coming to our Lord is by believing in him without reasoning, by the simple movement of grace to which the soul is faithful. (He goes on to the second way) 'Even though you do not believe in me, believe at least in my works'; he adds: 'so that you may know and believe'. Through these works, and in this second way of coming to our Lord, they would have begun by knowing — 'that you may know', and after knowing by the help of grace they would have come to believe — 'that you may believe'.

And what was the object of this faith? 'That the Father is in me and I am in the Father'. This explains the words he said earlier that so scandalized them and the proof he had just given: 'I and the Father are one'. He and his Father are only one substance and yet two persons. The Father's whole substance is completely in the whole substance of the Son and fills it. And the whole substance of the Son is completely in the whole substance of the Father and fills it. Now, the Son being completely thus in the Father and the Father being completely in the Son, it follows that the Father's substance is the Son's and nevertheless there is a distinction. Since the Father is in the Son, the Son must be distinguished from the Father in order to contain him. If he was not distinguished from the Father, he could not possess the Father in him but would be the Father. The same holds for the Father, in whom is the Son. Father and Son have one same existence, one same being, one same nature, one same substance, one same life, one same essence, and as a result of all this one same operation, such that the Father's works are the Son's works and those of the Son are the Father's.

'If I do the works of my Father', says our Lord. Through this existence of the Father in the Son our Lord did his Father's works, his Father was working through him. That is why he says that the works of power he performed were done in his Father's name. They were his Father's works and yet he did them through his

own power, because the Father's power was in him and was his as well as the Father's.

Through these words our Lord explains something of his eternal generation. His Father begot him from all eternity and in begetting him he begot his own substance. 'The Father is in me'. It is not a part of himself that he produces, not an object foreign to himself, not something over and above himself. It is his own nature, his own substance and his own essence that he produces by a substantial, eternal and infinite act. The sole difference between the Father and the Son is that the Father begets and the Son is begotten. The Father begets the Son in his own bosom and not outside. The immensity of the Son is begotten by the Father's immensity, and the immensity of the Son remains and fills the whole immensity of the Father: 'and I am in the Father'.

Here our Lord also indicates the double relationship, which is eternal, substantial, essential and infinite, of the Father with the Son and of the Son with the Father, from which relationship proceeds essentially and necessarily the Holy Spirit, as immense, as infinite and as much essential being as the Father and the Son. As well as existing necessarily the Father also necessarily begets his Son from all eternity. And just as he necessarily begets, likewise it is necessary that he beget him within his bosom, that is to say, that he beget him necessarily. The relationships, similarly, between the two divine Persons are necessary and essential, or rather the relationship of the Son to the Father is as essential as the Father's begetting.

Just as the relationships of the Father and the Son are essential, substantial and necessary, likewise must the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son and from the essential relationships of Father and Son. Thus as in all things there is an equality of essence, an equality of necessity and an equal and same substance. From this it follows that the Father is as much in the Son as he is in himself, and the Father and Son are as much in the Holy Spirit as they are in themselves, and the Holy Spirit is as much in the Father and in the Son as he is in himself.

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Whence the same substance, same essence, same nature, same perfections and same working in all three divine Persons and in each one as in all the others. The whole essence, substance and infinite divine perfections are in the Father as in the original source, for he is not begotten nor does he proceed from any substance equal to him or lower or higher than him, foreign to him or proper to him, but he is what he is through himself and in himself necessarily, eternally and infinitely. The whole essence, substance and infinite perfections that are in the Father are equally in the Son, not as origin but as begotten by his Father. These are the essence, substance and infinite perfections of the Father, which are as perfectly, as substantially, as necessarily and as eternally in the Son as in the Father because the Father begets his Son essentially, substantially, necessarily and consequently eternally and infinitely.

Although the Father's divine Being is in the Son by begetting and not as origin, yet there is nothing less in the Son than in the Father except Fatherhood. And the Son is inferior in nothing to the Father, not less perfect in anything whatsoever; the same Being exists from all eternity and in the same perfection in the Son as in the Father and it exists as essentially and necessarily in the Son as in the Father. The same has to be said of the Holy Spirit. The whole essence, substance and all the infinite perfections that are in the Father and the Son are equally in the Holy Spirit in the same infinity and in the same perfection as they are in the Father and the Son, not as origin as in the Father, nor by begetting as in the Son, but by procession. The essence, substance and infinite perfections of the Father and of the Son are in the Holy Spirit as perfectly, as substantially, as necessarily and as eternally as in the Father and the Son. This is because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son essentially, substantially and necessarily, and consequently eternally and infinitely. And the same Being which is in the Father and the Son is as infinitely and as necessarily in the Holy Spirit.

Although this infinite and sovereign Being is in the Father as

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origin, in the Son as generation and in the Holy Spirit through procession, nevertheless there is no superiority between the three divine Persons but perfect equality without any dependence except that of being of one same substance and one same nature. Nor is there any difference except that the Father is the origin, existing through himself, and the Son is begotten by his Father from all eternity and without beginning, and the Holy Spirit proceeds, from all eternity and without beginning, from the Father and the Son.

This eternal perfect existence of the one same divine substance constitutes the unity of God. And this difference constitutes the Trinity of God or the distinction of three divine Persons, who are truly united by one and the same nature and one and the same substance, yet are truly distinct in the Trinity of Persons. Each of these two qualities (that is to say, unity and trinity) is as essential and necessary as the other.

In order to begin to grasp what the distinction of the three divine Persons consists in, we must know who among them is called Father, who Son and who Holy Spirit, and why the Father cannot be the Son or the Holy Spirit and vice versa, and why the Son cannot be the Holy Spirit and vice versa. The divine substance or being existing from all eternity necessarily and essentially, of itself and in itself, is the Father, who is neither made nor begotten, who proceeds from nowhere but who exists in himself (I am who am) and of himself, an infinitely perfect being. That is why the Father cannot be the Son or the Holy Spirit. This does not constitute him as Father, but the act of begetting does. God, conceiving infinitely, eternally, essentially, substantially and necessarily his divine substance in its essence and infinite perfection is called Father because he begets his Son. The Son possesses in himself all the divine substance of the Father in all its infinite perfections.

This divine substance, infinitely perfect, eternal and essential, conceived thus in the infinite intelligence of the Father in a

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manner that is substantial, infinite, eternal, essential and necessary: – this is the Son, as perfect, as eternal, as infinite, as essentially and as necessarily existing as the Father. He possesses nothing other than the Father's nature and substance. The only point is that he is conceived as it were by the Father's infinite intelligence, that is to say, as begotten and consequently he is not Father but Son. Since the Son's passive generation is as eternal, as necessary, as infinite as the Father's active generation and existence, it follows that the Son is in all things as perfect as the Father and inferior to him in nothing. 'I and the Father are one': one in perfect equality.

Thus far this is simply the explanation of the words, 'the Father is in me'. The Father conceiving thus his own divine substance essentially and necessarily, and through this conception forming essentially and necessarily his Son, as perfect and as infinite as himself, forms by that very fact, as essentially, as necessarily, as infinitely, between himself and his Son a relationship as necessary, as eternal, as infinite, as substantial and as essential as that conception. This infinite substance of God thus conceived is the Son, and the Father conceives him in his own bosom and in his own substance and essence. From this results the infinite, substantial, eternal and necessary pleasure the divine Being takes in his own infinite substance, conceived in this same manner, which is substantial, essential and so on.

This pleasure, essential and proceeding substantially and necessarily from the relationship of the Father with his Son and of the Son with the Father is the Holy Spirit. He is called the Holy Spirit because he is the essential and substantial breath of the Father going to the Son and of the Son going to the Father. This is called proceeding. Thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, he proceeds also from the Son, and nevertheless he does not come out from the bosom of the Father and Son but remains there as essentially and necessarily as the Son remains in the Father and as the Father remains in himself. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, not by a double procession but by a procession

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essentially and necessarily one, as much as the divine substance is one and as the generation of the Son is one.

From all this it will be seen that the Holy Spirit is not the Father nor the Son. He is not begotten since he is not conceived, but he proceeds from the active and passive generation of Father and Son, that is to say, from the essential relationships existing because of this wonderful generation. The Spirit proceeds, then, from the Father and the Son. However, since these relationships and this procession are essential, eternal, substantial, and so on, it follows that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance of the Father and of the Son, just as they are in themselves, and that the Father and the Son are in the Holy Spirit as much as they are in themselves and as much as they are in one another, since the Holy Spirit proceeds essentially and substantially from that essential and substantial being, of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is in the Father and the Son as much as he is in himself. Whence the perfect unity of nature and perfect Trinity of Persons. A wonderful mystery, forever incomprehensible to every creature on this earth marred by ignorance and sin.

The three Persons thus understood do not exist only in a human, imaginative way of speaking, in the sense in which Scripture sometimes speaks for example, of the hand of God and so on. But the three adorable Persons really and distinctly exist in this way in the divinity. In this lies the great difference between the Persons and the attributes of God himself – God's immensity, infinity, eternity and so on – and his perfections and attributes in his relationships with creation – his justice, mercy and so on. These attributes are distinct only in our mind, while in the divinity they are all fused in his one indivisible essence. These perfections or attributes are nothing other than the divine substance and essence seen through our feeble minds from different points of view. Thus God's immensity is the immense God, and so on for the other perfections or attributes. Now in the divine essence all is one and nothing is divided, nothing modified; the only point is that

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because our mind is too feeble and limited to see the divinity in its essence we see it in this way, always under certain categories with which we are familiar.

Furthermore, even the attributes taken separately according to our feeble ideas cannot be conceived in themselves but always in connection with a created object corresponding to them: immensity in relation to space, infinity in relation to something finite or limited, eternity in relation to time and so on for the rest. Attributes that reflect God's relationship with creatures can be seen in the way they affect creatures. That is how we distinguish justice and mercy.

From all this it can be seen that the words, 'and I in the Father', point indirectly and by way of conclusion to the procession of the Holy Spirit, since this wonderful procession stems necessarily and essentially from the turning of the Son towards the Father as well as from the existence of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father.

As the Persons are distinct in the most holy Trinity, and yet there is one and the same nature and one and the same infinite being in the three divine Persons and in each of them, likewise each Person has his own attributes or attributions and his own activities, which stem from these distinct attributes or attributions. Nevertheless, these attributes or attributions and these activities, while pertaining personally to one of the three Persons, are nevertheless essentially the same in the other Persons. This is proved by our Lord's words, 'I and the Father are one'. They are one in such a way that everything which is in the Son is in the Father, and every action of the Father is an action of the Son and vice versa. This is why our Lord says he does the works of his Father and through these works the Father is seen in him, because these attributes of the Person of the Father are manifested in the Son's works. Our Lord states this in still another place, when he says to his Father: 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine' (Jn17:10).

Although these attributes and activities are necessarily and essentially one and the same in the three Persons through the

essential unity of their nature, yet they are distinct and proper to the Person to whom they are attributed, with the same distinction, and as much so, as exists between the divine Persons. This distinction is not only theoretical, it is real with the same reality as the distinction between the three Persons. As a consequence of the very principle that they are essentially and necessarily united, sharing one same nature, likewise it may be concluded that they are distinct as a result of the distinction between the three Persons. If it is difficult to conceive how a divine attribute or operation can be particular and distinct to one Person and yet be common to all three Persons as essentially as to that one to which they are particular, the same difficulty exists for the distinction of Persons. This cannot be grasped; because the divine essence cannot be grasped, it is a mystery for us on this earth. The same will hold for the personal attributes and personal activity of the divine Persons.

Thus omnipotence is attributed to the Person of the Father, and eternity also, since he is called the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9.13.22). The Son and the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, have the same omnipotence as essentially and as eternally as the Father. Yet these attributes are distinctly and specially personal to the Father because they are in the essence of fatherhood, which distinguishes him as a Person. Since every divine act of power is an activity of the divinity, it is consequently an operation of all three Persons. At the same time it is a personal activity of the Father. The same must be said of the Son with respect to the attribute of wisdom and the workings of wisdom; and of the Holy Spirit in the attribute of love and the loving actions. This distinction in the personal activity of each divine Person, joined to the essential natural union of all three divine Persons in the same activity, is expressed in the words, 'I do the works of my Father'. 'I do': refers to the personal activity of our Lord working on earth who works as the Person of the Son. 'The works of my Father' refers to the essential natural union of the other divine Persons in the operations of the Son. Although our Lord said these words to prove to the Jews that his Father was in him, the words speak nevertheless at the same time

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about the distinctive activity of the Son and the perfect union of the Father in the Son's activity.

39. *Quaerebant ergo iterum eum  
apprehendere: et exiit de manibus  
eorum.*

39. *Again they tried to arrest him,  
but he escaped from their hands.*

Our Lord used his power to prevent his enemies from continuing to want to stone him. He was not to die this way, his time had not yet come. That is why they did not cast the stones they had taken in their hands. It may also be that they were ashamed to stone him having received so many benefits. This may have been the meaning of our Lord's reproach to them: 'For which of these do you stone me?' They let the stones with which they had equipped themselves fall from their hands but did not give up their evil plan to bring about his death. That is why they wanted to seize him to judge him legally, at least in appearance, so as to clear themselves of the shame of killing their benefactor. Now they set out to find a way of making him seem a blasphemer. Thus they would be freed from the odium of having killed him and cast that shame on to him. But it was not yet time to capture him and he saw to it that they could not detain him. In vain they seized him, he slipped through their hands by his divine power.

40. *Et abiit iterum trans Jordanem,  
in eum locum ubi erat Joannes  
baptizans primum: et mansit illic.*

40. *He went away again across the  
Jordan to the place where John at  
first baptized, and there he  
remained.*

In Jerusalem there was simply no recognition of our Lord's divinity or belief in his word, even though he had shown them clearly he was the Son of God. So our divine Master left Jerusalem, the city that had witnessed so many and such great miracles, that was so guilty in its unbelief. He made for the spot at the Jordan where John baptised earlier and where the Lamb of God went to meet him and receive his testimony: 'where John had first baptised'. He went there in order to find some faithful souls and

strengthen them in faith. In this spot John's memory and testimony were still fresh and all the people still spoke of them. He wished, moreover, to recall the memory of John and the great testimony he had given to him so that no one would have an excuse for not believing. Besides, he wished to be near this spot so that John even after his death might still give testimony. Everyone must have compared John with this new personage who came after him, and felt strongly the great advantages the Son of God had over him. As a result of this comparison they would have recalled all that John had said of him. The good this did was twofold. It must have clarified and greatly strengthened people's faith, and in the second place the Saviour tacitly gave testimony to John's great mission. This glorified him in the eyes of all the people when they saw the truth of all that John had said and sensed the reason for which he humbled himself so much before the divine Lamb. So our Lord stayed in this place to allow all these reflections to mature in his mind and bring about some good results through the help of the graces he spread about in the area by his very presence.

41. *Et multi venerunt ad eum,  
et dicebant: Quia Joannes quidem  
signum fecit nullum;*

42. *Omnia autem, quaecumque dixit  
Joannes de hoc, vera erant.  
Et multi crediderunt in eum.*

41. *And many came to him; and they  
said, "John did no sign, but  
everything that John said about  
this man was true."*

42. *And many believed in him  
there.*

As soon as the Saviour reached the place, John's testimony, which was well remembered, brought him many people: 'many came'. But when once they had spent some time with the divine Lamb and had seen the great miracles he kept on doing, they had no further need of John's witness; on the contrary they became convinced of John's greatness and the divine origin of his mission through the one to whom he had given testimony. It is true that John had done no miracle to give testimony to his mission, but

John's great miracle was that everything he had foretold about this person had come true. Therefore a big number believed in him.

This is our Lord's normal approach in the conversion of souls. People begin by becoming favourably disposed and drawing closer to him. He draws them now in one way now in another. It is always he who disposes minds to come close to him, through various means he employs for that purpose. Here it was the witness that was given earlier by John that disposed minds, favourably disposed them and made them approach our Lord. Once a soul comes close and follows him, he lets it see some part of the divine wonders he embodies; then the mind reflects on things, learns to know our Lord, becomes clear and convinced and the will comes into play. When will is joined to reason the soul is established in faith through perfect adhesion to our Lord and his divine word.

John worked no miracles since he lived only for the Messiah that was to come, he was to prepare the way for him. That is why he had to leave all the honours of divine power to him so that at the first appearing of the Messiah John would disappear at once in order that everyone would go to the Messiah, drawn by the extraordinary spectacle of his miracles. All the miracles worked by our Lord, moreover, were so many proofs of John's mission and veracity. Besides, John did not seek to fix the people's attention on himself except as much as was needed to lead them to the Messiah. He never wished to be the centre of attention.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Resurrection of Lazarus

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| 1. <i>Erat autem quidam languens<br/>Lazarus a Bethania, de castello<br/>Mariae et Marthae sororis ejus.</i> | 1. <i>Now a certain man was ill,<br/>Lazarus of Bethany, the village<br/>of Mary and her sister Martha.</i> |
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Our Lord remained a certain length of time at Bethany (for that was the place where St John baptised and gave witness to our Lord); he drew many good souls to himself, among whom were principally St Mary, St Martha and Lazarus. This whole family was very attached to our Lord and the divine Master had a special tenderness for the three saintly members of it. Thus he chose it for accomplishing one of the greatest miracles of his grace and filled it with favours. Because of the Son of God's special predilection for this family the well beloved disciple takes pleasure in giving us all the details we find here and preserving for us the names of these worthy persons favoured by our Lord.

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| 2. <i>Maria autem erat, quae unxit<br/>Dominum unguento, et extersit<br/>pedes ejus capillis suis: cujus<br/>frater Lazarus infirmabatur.</i> | 2. <i>It was Mary who anointed the<br/>Lord with ointment and wiped<br/>his feet with her hair, whose<br/>brother, Lazarus, was ill.</i> |
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We see the holy evangelist's satisfaction with these people who so loved his Master, but especially with Mary, great lover of our Lord. He hastens to mention a fact he will narrate further on in chapter twelve, an event that shows this great saint's love for our Lord. In this chapter the Holy Spirit wishes to instruct us through this wonderful episode of twofold divine love: Jesus' love for people and the love they had for him. He first introduces us carefully to the characters. Since a greater and more perfect love shows itself in Mary and since our Lord shows greater preference for her, the Holy Spirit also tells us from the beginning what kind of person she was.

The episode of Mary pouring the ointment on our Lord is the same as that recounted in St Matthew's gospel, 26:7, and in St. Mark's, 14:3, although St John in chapter twelve does not speak of (the Saviour's) feet, and St. Matthew and St. Mark speak only of his head being anointed. These two evangelists say nothing about the saint wiping his feet with her hair. This does not preclude it from being the same event spoken of by the three evangelists. St John applies here what is missing in chapter twelve and explains everything. He says: 'who anointed the Lord and wiped his feet'. The ointment was poured on our Lord's head; the saint did not wipe our Lord's head as that would have been out of place. Having broken the vessel to let the precious ointment flow over his head she kept some for his feet, which she then wiped with her hair. St John alone speaks of this last circumstance.

St Luke also narrates a similar episode, ch.7,v.37, but it is not the same, for there we are dealing with a sinful woman and at the time of the Passion. St Mary was a saint, a great saint, even respected by the Jews, as is evident in this chapter. But devout souls should believe that this Mary is the same as she who is called also Magdalene in other places, since the Roman Church continues in this belief, according to a prayer in the Roman Missal for the saint's feast. Indeed the whole office of Saint Mary, sister of St Martha, is the same as that of St Magdalene, so most clearly the Missal prayer states that it is the same person. Now if it is the same person we must believe that this episode of St Luke also happened at Bethany, which is certainly possible, and at the house of the same Pharisee, called Simon the leper in St Matthew and St Mark, and called Simon also by our Lord, who addresses him in St Luke. This use of the same name seems to indicate the same person.

If that is so, this episode would have happened at an earlier moment, when our Lord reached Bethany on returning from Galilee. St Mary's conversion would date from this time and it was then that our Lord drove out seven devils that kept her in sin. The second time the episode would have happened in the same house

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of Simon the Pharisee, who is called the leper. Our Lord had probably cured him of leprosy and this would have drawn him to our Lord. The fact that the same action was repeated twice strongly indicates that the same person was responsible in each case. This is confirmed by the fact that the outpouring of heart with which the action was accompanied was duplicated.

Magdalene's name could give rise to difficulty, for the word means Mary's countryside, that is to say, Gdalene. But the house of the two sisters although situated in Bethany or thereabouts could have borne the name of Gdalene. In the first verse of this chapter the evangelist gives this to be understood by saying that Lazarus was from Bethany and adding, 'the village of Mary and her sister Martha'. This is said in order to clarify things better than the name does: (Bethany is) the town to which this chateau or country house belonged. Now what is to stop us from believing that this *castellum* of Mary and Martha had the name Gdalene?

3. *Miserunt ergo sorores ejus ad eum, dicentes: Domine, ecce quem amas infirmatur.*

3. *So the sisters were sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill".*

People reveal themselves in words and actions; the smallest number of words issuing from the deepest interior dispositions can reveal what people are. This happens here. The great and pure love of Mary and Martha shines through the few words of the message they send to our Lord in the critical circumstance in which they find themselves; so also the other dispositions that go with profound love. The first characteristics of genuine love consist in the faith and hope that accompany it. They appear clearly in these two devout persons. Such virtues ordinarily come to great strength and perfection from the intensity of love that reigns in the soul. The way they sent the message to the divine Master that their brother was sick indicates their respectful faith. This faith will appear more strongly in their first interview.

Their hope was so great that they did not even directly ask for their brother's cure but simply said, 'he whom you love is ill'.

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Hope is founded on the love of the person one hopes in. It draws its perfection from the faith and especially the love in our hearts, which has for source the same love that Jesus has for us. This constitutes the foundation of hope. That is why we cannot reflect on the dispositions of these two blessed people, who at this juncture tell their troubles to their beloved Master, without noticing the great hope underlying their words. This hope was inspired by a love that is very great and very much alive. Their words show the devout familiarity of these two good people with their divine Master, an ease that enjoys and accepts their adorable Master's ease with them and their brother. The love these two holy sisters display, has all the characteristics of genuine disinterestedness. It is a mark of disinterested love to make a soul shy of asking for what is only in its own interests. This comes in large part from the fact that all prayers and requests are outpourings of this divine love, hence all prayers and requests should have the savour of divine love. One who speaks to their adorable Master to pray or make a request enters into this love.

Drawn along by it, the one praying expands on the object of their request. When love is pure and completely disinterested, the soul does not insist on things that are for its own satisfaction and self-interest; it scarcely dares to suggest them because it is too taken up with the object of its pure love and too delicate in opening its heart. There is no calculating spirit in this reserve, but the soul respects the movement and inclinations of love and the customary stance of the heart. The heart cannot dream of asking strongly for what is only for itself. All this is verified in these women's words. They make the point to their Master: he whom you love is sick. They do not dare to say, come quickly to heal him, as did the prince (Chapter Five) who urged him to come with him and heal his son before he died. They make their point and surrender everything to his love for the sick man; they do enough to show their desire to have their brother cured but they do not dare to insist. They know Jesus' love and wait for whatever this divine love will inspire him to do.

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This makes for a good prayer. It starts from genuine love and trust; the heart feels that our Lord loves it more than it loves itself. It has no need to importune him with cries and a multiplicity of words, no need to be eloquent. It suffices to show one's needs and manifest one's desires with respect, love, faith and confidence. By so persevering in one's holy desire one obtains all, as will emerge later in this chapter. A second effect of disinterested love is submission to the divine will. While remaining strongly confident of being heard, the believer, through this very loving confidence, leaves its fate in the hands of the one whom he loves and by whom he knows himself loved. This attitude will appear in the two sisters in the first meeting they have with our Lord after their brother's death. A third effect, which follows on the other two, is peace of soul. A person is in difficulty and desires to be delivered from the affliction and obtain release but is in no rush, does not become anguished or troubled. This is the way these two great saints behave.

4. *Audiens autem Jesus, dixit eis:  
infirmetas haec non est ad  
mortem, sed pro gloria Dei,  
ut glorificetur Filius Dei  
per eam.*

4. *But when Jesus heard it he said,  
"This illness is not unto  
death; it is for the glory of God,  
so that the Son of God may be  
glorified by means of it."*

Jesus listened favourably to what he was told, 'hearing', yet he appeared to do nothing about it in practice. He remained where he was, making no move to go to the help of these good people. From what follows it becomes clear that this seeming indifference did not prevent him from really answering their prayer, even though not as soon as, or in the manner, they would have wished at first. There is a good lesson in this for devout people who ask for help in their afflictions and needs. At times the divine Master appears to ignore them. Let them have no fear, he hears them and after hearing them acts according to his Father's good pleasure. His Father always draws glory from the prayer of his faithful servants. Prayers of fervent souls will always be heard to the full extent of



their desires when these desires are according to the genuine pure love of their adorable Master and for their greater advantage, although the object may often not be granted in the way they requested it.

The two sisters made a devout and loving prayer to our Lord. They firmly believed they would be heard, and they intended the divine Master to come and heal their brother. Their prayer was correct and really would be heard. It would obtain the result which he who had inspired it in them wanted to produce and not that which the devout sisters wanted. The prayer was that Jesus would come and procure his Father's glory, and he came. If the prayer had not been made, he would probably not have come. His Father's glory would not have been procured, through the failure of human beings to make the prayer. But the prayer was not heard in exactly the way the two women proposed it, because the Holy Spirit did not inspire that intention. It was a human intention, stemming from nature and not from God.

Every prayer stemming from nature remains unheard; the Holy Spirit must pray in us with sighs too deep for words. All faithful souls must imitate these two devout people in their prayers. They must pray fervently, lovingly, trustfully and respectfully, surrendering to the whole movement of the Holy Spirit, not seeking to distinguish and discern what comes from the Holy Spirit in our desires and what from nature, but simply surrendering. Two things are needed to make our prayer correct. The first is a habit of pure disinterested love so that we do not seek our own interests above those of others; this will influence our prayer so that it has all the marks of pure disinterested love, as is noted in the preceding verse. In the second place, we must avoid the faults we see clearly. Whenever we pray thus in simplicity and abandonment to the Holy Spirit in great loving fervour, our prayer will be heard. Our Lord will simply disengage what comes from ourselves and what comes from him and will hear our prayer for the glory of our heavenly Father and according to his wonderful plans. For our part, we must imitate these two sisters of Lazarus

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and remain perfectly submissive, persevering continually in humble, loving desires before the divine majesty.

Our Lord told those who had been sent that Lazarus' sickness was not 'unto death'. That is to say, his Father's divine providence, which sent this 'sickness' to Lazarus, did not send it to him intending to let him die; his Father's plans went beyond that and ended up in procuring his glory by this means. Our Lord thereby wished to say that the effect of this sickness (that is to say, death) would not be permanent. The sickness would bring about death, but it was not given for that purpose. God did not directly intend Lazarus' death but indirectly willed a temporary cessation of life in order to raise him later for his glory. So our Lord did not say, 'Lazarus will not die', but only, 'this sickness is not to bring about his death'.

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| 5. <i>Diligebat autem Jesus Martham et sororem ejus Mariam, et Lazarum.</i>                  | 5. <i>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.</i>                                     |
| 6. <i>Ut ergo audivit quia infirmabatur, tunc quidem mansit in eodem loco duobus diebus.</i> | 6. <i>So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.</i> |
| 7. <i>Deinde post haec dixit discipulis suis: Eamus in Judaeam iterum.</i>                   | 7. <i>Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again."</i>                |

Our Lord read his heavenly Father's orders and wishes. These said that Lazarus' sickness was to be for his glory and Jesus was to bring about that glory. In accordance with his Father's divine will he was not to leave immediately but wait two days so as to arrive at a suitable time to bring honour to the Father in accordance with his plans. Not out of any want of love did Jesus remain in Galilee. The evangelist remarks, 'Now Jesus loved...' He had to say this to inform us that the divine Master acted in everything by his Father's will. He resumes the narrative: 'So when he heard' and so on. When he learnt of Lazarus' sickness, he remained two more

days. After these two days he told his disciples he wished to move towards Judea.

8. *Dicunt ei discipuli: Rabbi, nunc quaerebant te Judaei lapidare et iterum vadis illuc?*

8. *The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"*

Two days after the news of Lazarus' sickness our Lord told the apostles that he was returning to Judea, without giving the reason, and the apostles could not but make the observation that their fear inspired. According to human prudence, in fact, our Lord should not have returned to Judea, especially if he had no reason to, as the apostles first thought. But the divine Master never acted in anything for reasons of human prudence, which are only darkness, but through the clarity his Father and his Father's divine will afforded. Although the apostles had the best of intentions in saying this and their attachment to their Master inspired the fear in them, it does not alter the fact that they acted wrongly. They judged the course of divine wisdom by human views and vision instead of entrusting themselves to be led by faith, renouncing their own vision.

9. *Respondit Jesus: Nonne duodecim horae sunt diei? si quis ambulaverit in die, non offendit, quia lucem hujus videt:*

9. *Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day. If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.*

10. *Si autem ambulaverit in nocte offendit, quia lux non est in eo.*

10. *But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

Our Lord answered by way of parables, exhorting them to more faith and to act by this faith, renouncing their reason. That is why, instead of replying directly to their question by giving them the reasons for going to Judea, he only gave reasons for following him



without examining the motives for his actions. To explain this our Lord used the image of daylight. Those who walk by day walk by favour of the light of this world. Although human beings of themselves can see nothing, nevertheless walking by day they see the sunlight and so do not fall or knock against things. But if people walk by night they hurt themselves, they stumble and fall because they are fully in the dark; their eyes have no light by themselves. At night the daylight does not show the way, so they trip. It is foolish then to walk by night when it would be so easy to walk by day. This is what our Lord (says): aren't there twelve hours in the day when one can walk with assurance, and if one has twelve hours (by day) why prefer the night?

Now to apply this parable to spiritual things. In order to understand the full meaning of the terms our Lord uses we must recall that we receive two kinds of light through our faith in our Lord. The first are the light and perfect gifts of a soul that is perfectly mortified and solidly advanced in the divine life of faith. A soul that has firmly established the habit of acting, considering and judging everything only through the light our Lord gives, to which it adheres uniquely and perfectly through pure holy faith – a soul in that condition receives divine guidance as if it came from itself. The believer benefits from this guidance, is assisted by it in all aspects of life. This enlightenment comes through the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The faith of these souls is no longer blind but perfectly enlightened and luminous, it bestows clarity within, and is evident in all their activity. This was not the apostles' condition at this moment; but it would be their condition later, after they had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The second kind of light is given to those still imperfect and little advanced in the life of faith. They do not possess these great gifts of the Holy Spirit which clearly illuminate what is deepest within us. Grace dwells in them and by this grace they adhere by faith to our Lord who is the greatest light. As long as they follow this faith in their behaviour they have great assurance in their

activity, even though at heart they are not inwardly enlightened in their behaviour and activity. They have faith, they act by faith, but it is a blind faith. The light their faith generates spreads only to their outward action. It makes them avoid evil, but it does not give them the interior clarity to discern all the good contained in their situation. Our Lord speaks of the kind of person here. Are there not twelve hours in the day? That is to say, have we not all the faculties to act by faith? Is our Lord not with us whenever we wish to act? The greater divine light was given to the apostles personally and bodily, they only had to follow his words although they did not always understand what they meant.

Jesus is with us by the commands and counsels of his holy gospel and by his interior grace, which keeps drawing us onwards. We have only to follow it, although we may not always understand it perfectly since it is above our little minds. 'To walk' refers simply to the general and particular behaviour of our soul as it directs itself towards an object or a goal. Now this object and (goal) ought to be God alone sought in and through all our actions and conduct. To obtain this object and reach this goal we need our Lord's divine light, for of ourselves and in ourselves we have only deep total darkness, such as would make us forever incapable of directing ourselves on this journey.

If then people would walk during the day, that is to say, if they are not guided in their spiritual journey and conduct by the views of their own minds, which are without light, but by the lights of our Lord, who is the sun of the spiritual world – these people truly walk during the day. They do themselves no harm, they do not trip, that is, they do not stumble or hit against anything that could do them harm, they do not thwart the divine will or resist it in anything. This happens not because they know thoroughly and fully understand God's view of them and their activity; they do not always know exactly what he thinks; the divine light they enjoy is not strong enough to see everything clearly. But they recognise the light of this spiritual supernatural world, which shows them what to do and avoid. This divine light will

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illuminate the scene around them and that suffices to prevent them from stumbling against anything.

This was the situation in which the apostles found themselves. They would follow the lights of our Lord, who said expressly they had to go into Judea, but without knowing why. They would go into Judea contrary to their own opinion, for the guiding word of the adorable Master told them where to go without communicating the inner light of spiritual understanding. In walking thus by day, in leaving our own ideas and following the views of the divine Sun, we will not have (because of our imperfect gift of faith) a great burst of light within ourselves, but we will profit from it to walk with assurance, being enlightened by this light at least in our public behaviour.

But if we walk during the night, following our own ideas and judgment quite independently of our Lord's lights and in opposition to him and his way of acting, then we will stumble, that is to say, hit or knock against the divine desires and take umbrage at them. This comes from not having the light within us; the light of faith and of our Lord's word do not guide us, because we refuse them in order to guide ourselves by ourselves. Nothing then remains to guide us but the light we think we have within us. Now we have no light within ourselves, so the result is that we keep on being upset by everything we meet that thwarts our activity and conduct. This was the attitude of the apostles; they did not understand their Master's behaviour and wished to follow their own darkness rather than the divine light. They would have walked in the night and pitted themselves against the divine will, which planned to work such great things on this journey that they disliked so much. They would have gone wrong in that way for the sole reason that they had no light within themselves to understand and grasp God's plans about this journey into Judea. Now, having no light within themselves they were still meant to follow the light of the divine sun, which enlightened their public behaviour, rather than walk in the night of their own darkness.



11. *Haec ait, et post haec dixit eis:  
Lazarus amicus noster dormit, sed  
vado ut a somno excitem eum.*

11. *Thus he spoke, and then he said  
to them, "Our friend Lazarus  
has fallen asleep, but I go to  
awake him out of sleep."*

These things he said. The divine Master said these words to show them their fault and teach them how to act as true disciples of eternal Wisdom. After giving them this lesson, he explained the motive for his departure from Judea and the object of the divine will in that move. Our Lord called Lazarus' death a sleep because it was not to be a permanent death but a momentary absence of his spirit, which during that interval ceased all its functions in the body, leaving the body motionless and lifeless. It might also be said that there is a difference between ordinary death and the death of a person who is to be raised by miracle, in accordance with the term sleep, which our Lord used both here and in St Luke, chapter 8, about the daughter of Jairus. In ordinary death only the body is rigid and motionless, the soul exercises its functions within itself and independently of the body. It is both active and passive, producing all its ordinary acts. Its power to do this is received from the Creator while absorbing the images the Creator enables it to take in. But in the death of those who are to be raised miraculously, God enables the soul to remain rigid and asleep, having no activity and receiving no perception until its return to the body. It is neither dead nor annihilated but has not the power to exercise its vital functions; it is asleep.

Then by a new act of divine power our Lord stirs up the soul and withdraws it from this sleep to return to its customary functions. Perhaps one could say that the soul does not even leave the body but only that its functions are suspended and this explains why our Lord calls it sleep. But this suspension of the soul's functions is such that without an extraordinary power conferred by God the soul could never come back. In this light it is understandable that our Lord said of the daughter of Jairus that

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she was not dead but slept. In reality and before God the girl was not dead, because a certain link remained which united soul and body. On the other hand, she could be considered in reality and before God as truly dead since the soul had lost all control and the body all vital functioning. This happened in such a way that in its natural condition the soul could no longer give life and movement to the body, and an act of power was needed to give it this ability which it did not possess in itself by reason of its nature. So our Lord would soon say, 'Lazarus... is dead'.

In the preceding verse he added, 'But I go to awake him out of sleep'. He wakened him from the sleep we have just spoken about. As this death is like a sleep, the act of power by which the sovereign Lord brings it back to life is called awakening. By an effect of this powerful grace which he extends over the dead person to withdraw him from his condition of death he unlooses the bonds that keep the soul weighed down and wakens it, giving it life and activity. The first act gives it its passivity and the second its activity, the power to act.

But why did our Lord say, 'I go'? Why did he not remain in Galilee? He could have done all he had just accomplished without leaving where he was. He went to show his great mercy, how good and incomprehensibly tender is his divine heart for those who love him. The love of this heart is so great that it is impenetrable to the very people who live closest to him. This great love induced him to go to Lazarus and furnished him with a twofold reason for going. The first he indicates here and the second in verse 15. Jesus is full of grace, he superabounds with grace, he desires nothing so much as to find souls who love him in simplicity and to fill them. The more he can give the more his heart rejoices. The more he sees souls receiving from him the more he loves them.

O my Jesus, I too love you a little, although pettily and wretchedly. I too am your friend as much as Lazarus. I am dead like him, my soul is numb and incapable of anything. Come to me as well, if you please, with tenderness and satisfaction, give me also your graces to awaken me from my sleep so dangerous and

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so evil. I await them, Lord, most eagerly; come then in your great goodness, your great gentleness and your great love.

The first reason our Lord left the place he was staying was because Lazarus his friend was sleeping. Look at the advantage of being a friend of Jesus! We never love him without drawing a surfeit of love from him that will go on filling us with new graces and divine love. The graces our Lord accords to people who are not in the real intimacy of his love, he normally gives only from a distance. He does not draw close to them through intimate communication, he does not find his delight in them, and consequently his graces are less in number and strength and their influence does not extend as far. But when he draws close to us, as he did to Lazarus, then he puts no limit to his mercies. Thus our Lord went himself towards Lazarus as a consequence of his great (affection) for him and in order to give him an ever greater abundance of grace by his holy presence.

Another explanation of these words is possible. It will console people who truly love him and find themselves in situations that are painful for their love. Lazarus was a friend: 'our friend'. Although friend, he slept and could show no love by deliberate acts. But love for Jesus remained in that soul and it sufficed to attract Jesus' divine tenderness. Lazarus, friend of the divine Master, found himself in a pitiful condition. Although love dwelt within him he could not extricate himself from his dreadful sleep, nor could he come towards his well-beloved in order to be awakened from the sleep. Jesus, knowing this by his divine light, knowing that Lazarus his friend could not come to him – what did he do? His adorable heart was full of love for his friend and this love brought him into his presence. He came with great tenderness and goodwill and delivered him from his painful numbness to fill him with new and greater graces than ever before and make him a cause of salvation and sanctification for many.

He does this every day for souls that possess his divine love, that find themselves spiritually in the same situation as Lazarus through spiritual incapacity, through pains and afflictions,

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temptations of all kinds that weigh them down and bind them in such a way that they seem to themselves to be dead. They live in agitation and disquiet, languishing and listless in God's service; the fears and anguish of death surround them; their faculties are sometimes so bound and fettered that they are even incapable of an impulse of fear and anguish.

Let them be consoled: Jesus their Lord has not forgotten them. They may not be able to enter into his presence, they are constrained to remain buried in the dark tomb of their hearts, incapable of rising and going to seek him who alone can cure them; but Jesus loves them, he is pleased with them. He says to his angels and saints: Our friend sleeps but I am going to waken his soul from sleep. He makes it wait awhile, as he made Lazarus wait in the grave, but sooner or later he will come with great tenderness and the infinite mercy which his heart is full of and reward the soul generously by a new life even more perfect than the former because of all the pains, anguish and sadness that it has endured calmly, patiently and trustfully through his love and in his love. The pitiful states in which souls occasionally find themselves are often an effect of Jesus' love for them. He leaves them there on purpose so as to manifest his love and glory as he did with Lazarus. All they have to do is await the day of mercy patiently, lovingly, trustfully and humbly.

One thing clear from these words is how our divine Master used to make reprimands: gently and kindly. In the preceding verses the apostles, not knowing why their Master wished to go into Judea, answered back. They thought he was not acting prudently, their faith was weak and they were excessively timid. Our Lord reprimanded them, as is noted in verse 9 and 10, and immediately afterwards spoke the words of verse 11 to instruct them about his forthcoming departure for Judea. The words were so gentle and so filled with love and sweetness that we must necessarily conclude the preceding ones were said in the same spirit of gentleness and sweetness, like the continuation of the discourse. This is a rule to be followed by all those who are obliged to reprimand people

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under them. May the love of Jesus for his disciples be their inspiration at these moments, as well as his words, and may ill-humour, harshness and arrogance never enter into it. Their words must exhale a perfume of goodness.

12. *Dixerunt ergo ei discipuli ejus:  
Domine, si dormit, salvus erit.*

12. *The disciples said to him, "Lord,  
if he has fallen asleep, he will  
recover."*

13. *Dixerat autem Jesus de morte ejus:  
ipsi autem putaverunt quia de  
dormitione somni diceret.*

13. *Now Jesus had spoken of his  
death, but they thought that he  
meant taking rest in sleep.*

The apostles did not understand the meaning of 'he sleeps' and thought it was a matter of natural sleep, so they answered: if he sleeps he will be healed of his sickness. The first time our Lord said, 'Let us go once more into Judea' (verse 7), they did not remember what Lazarus' sisters had said to their Master about Lazarus, so they made the observation in verse 8, where they seem to be somewhat peevish. They loved their Master but did not have a faith that was sufficiently enlightened, so they feared for his life. Every day they had seen the great power he showed in his works; several times they had seen that his enemies could not prevail against him, and yet they were afraid. When the light of faith is not so bright and does not fill the soul, nothing can be done. Our spiritual conduct does not accord with our mind's conviction, and this conviction itself moreover slips away from us in difficult circumstances. But when the light is great we see clearly, our mind is consequently self-possessed or rather it works by the power by which it sees. Besides, this grace of a great light is accompanied by strength to follow the enlightenment of our mind fearlessly.

The apostles feared for their adorable Master and for themselves. This explains their first answer, which drew the reprimand of verses 9 and 10. When in verse 11 our Lord then recalled the memory of Lazarus they understood that he wished to go there to heal Lazarus, but they thought Lazarus was sleeping

with a natural sleep. They said the sick man would be cured, because that is the normal thing when sick people are getting better – sleep returns.

They had their reasons for saying this. Realizing that the divine Saviour, full of goodness for his friends, wished to go and put his life at risk so that Lazarus could be cured, they still hoped to dissuade him by the words: what use is it going to be, then? If he sleeps he will get better. They did not understand their divine Master's words because they were preoccupied with fear for his life and for their own. Nevertheless, they did not dare to resist them openly as appears in verse 7, they took a detour. Oh, he will get better, they said, if he sleeps. They seemed to say it by the way. They well knew that Jesus read their thoughts and knew all that passed through their minds; he had reprimanded them gently for not allowing themselves to be led and for judging things otherwise than he, who is the Father's eternal wisdom. It did not matter; they still did not see clearly, their faith was weak and so was their heart. They tried to bring eternal Wisdom around to their wrong judgments. This is remarkable. They believe in their Master's knowledge of Lazarus' condition, although three days' journey away from him, and they use this very divine knowledge by which he tells them of Lazarus' condition to make infinite Wisdom change his mind and follow their false lights and false wisdom.

If we watch carefully we will see that this often occurs in our own behaviour. It happens on numerous occasions that at any price we want our Lord to act according to our little lights, according to our will. The same thing very often happens to us in relation to divine providence. We are dissatisfied with our inner state of mind. Instead of the grace he gives us, we think such and such another grace would be better. If he sends crosses, inner or bodily pain, we wish for rest; if we are at rest we wish for crosses. We can never be satisfied.

Likewise, in the events of divine providence, if we were judges of the events we would decide quite differently. In everything that

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concerns ourselves we keep wanting to change God's plans to conform them to our petty little ideas and shadowy prudence. All this manner of acting proves the weakness of our faith. It is not for us to lead our Lord but to abandon ourselves fully to his divine wisdom and infinite love, goodness and power that we may be led where his heavenly Father wishes, that is to say, into the perfection of holiness. Yet we for our part keep on resisting.

It could also be that the apostles said these words not to prevent our Lord from going into Judea but out of the tender charity they had for Lazarus. This interpretation answers to our Lord's words, 'our friend'. They show that Lazarus loved the apostles very much – it is normal that Jesus' friends love one another: it is the mark by which he said his disciples would be known. Nevertheless the first explanation seems preferable because the latter does not furnish sufficient reason for the holy evangelist to record the apostles' words with their Master's answer, while the former shows how little the divine Lord was known by his apostles and how weak and timid they were in faith; at the same time it shows our kind Lord's goodness, which goes on manifesting such love for them. Besides, it is clear from verse 16 in St Thomas's words that the apostles had no desire to go and see Lazarus and hoped not to be obliged to go. Yet the words, 'but I go to awake him out of sleep', said clearly that our Lord was going.

14. *Tunc dixit ergo eis Jesus manifeste:  
Lazarus mortuus est,*

14. *Then Jesus told them plainly,  
"Lazarus is dead;*

15. *Et gaudeo propter vos, ut credatis,  
quoniam non eram ibi. Sed eamus  
ad eum.*

15. *and for your sake I am glad  
that I was not there, so that you  
may believe. But let us go to  
him."*

The extraordinary tenderness of this loving heart for those who belong to him shines out in these two verses. He sees their obfuscated mind, their weak faith, their timid nerveless will, he sees their little confidence in him and his infinite divine lights and

power. He sees them, in a word, full of imperfections and poor dispositions. But he sees that there is no malice in their conduct, their only difficulty is weakness; he sees that they love him and desire to be pleasing to him. Above all he feels his adorable heart filled with love for them. He sympathizes with their condition and deals with them according to his mercy and love. The most gentle lamb treats us likewise, and what soul is there that, desiring to please him, has not felt these same effects of his divine love? There is a big lesson in it as well for his servants who have responsibility for the behaviour of the good people that belong to him. They must bear with their weaknesses and imperfections, be sympathetic to them, gently take means to strengthen them as much as they can, never look to their own personal pains or injuries, to faults of distrust and other failings but maintain the same love for them in the love of Jesus' divine heart and undertake kind, salutary measures to heal them.

When Jesus saw his disciples full of darkness and faults because of their weakness of faith and trust, he addressed them once more with great kindness. He partly showed them already what he was going to do, and that in open terms. If he did not wish to enlighten them yet completely it was because the time set for that by the Father had not come. At least he felt compassionate towards them, he strengthened and warmed their hearts by his words of grace and filled them with great courage and confidence, although without enlightening them. There is much to admire in our adorable Saviour's way of acting towards his friends. The apostles were too weak to take in fully the light that perfect faith gives, light that guides us perfectly in our behaviour and shows us the interior dispositions in which we should act with regard to our divine Master. So they had to be strengthened first in the midst of their blindness and sustained until the time came to enlighten them completely.

Their pusillanimity was the reason they misunderstood what their Master said about the sleep of Lazarus. That same weakness gave rise to their erroneous hope of not being obliged to go and

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risk death in Judea. So our Lord began by pointing out their mistake and thus nullified the fine reason they had brought forward as a suggestion to keep him from going to Jerusalem. Having removed all subterfuge and all hope of escape from their minds, he strengthened their wills by the words of verse 15, where he states the second reason he has for going into Judea. It was not only to do good for Lazarus his friend and for his family but also to strengthen the apostles' faith. The words he used show his tenderness towards them.

'And I rejoice'. He rejoiced that he was not there in Judea before Lazarus died. He did not rejoice over Lazarus' death but over the good that would issue from it for his dear disciples: 'for your sake'. How interested our Lord is in his weak disciples! This interest is not in the qualities he finds in them but in the grace he is going to communicate to them: 'that you may believe'. This resurrection was bound to produce great improvement in the apostles' faith, which was all the more necessary for them since the hour of the Passion and of shame to their Master was not far off. They needed at this critical moment an extraordinary event to keep them from falling into total unbelief. The fresh memory of so considerable a miracle, worked on a person intimately known to all, one who dwelt near Jerusalem, was given to sustain them, to prevent them from falling into complete discouragement and to procure in part their return to the faith when they saw their Master risen.

The phrase must be noted: 'that I was not there'. If he had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Jesus' goodness is so great for his friends that he refuses them nothing. Lazarus' sisters would have asked for the healing of their brother and obtained it. By these words our Lord alludes to the fact that he remained in Galilee two days after learning of Lazarus' sickness. Moreover, he explains this delay, at least partly: it was to strengthen his apostles' faith. It is true that even had he left on the spot he would have arrived two days after the sick man died, but the four days that passed since Lazarus died made the miracle of resurrection more

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striking for the bystanders. Besides, it is also possible that he would have halted on the way and thus arranged to arrive too late. After strengthening their faith by this loving word he said once more: 'but let us go to him'.

Our Lord did not say expressly that he was going to raise Lazarus. The apostles would have believed and followed him more willingly, but their dispositions would have been less perfect. They enjoyed seeing their Master performing these great prodigies and would have a certain satisfaction in witnessing him bring a friend like Lazarus back to life. Furthermore, they would have a certain guarantee that nothing untoward would happen to them or their Master either. All these reasons would not be bad but it is still more perfect to surrender blindly to the Master's leading and follow him on his word alone without knowing what will become of one. That is why he left them in ignorance of his plans, or at most he only gave them a glimpse, while at the same (time) acting by grace on their hearts to enable them to surpass themselves and follow him with more abandon, not reasoning about his course of action. He says, 'that you may believe'. He does not state the object of this faith, for it has nothing determined about it. It is a question of general faith that has reached a certain degree of strength whereby we cleave to our Lord fearlessly, without disquiet, without calculating or understanding what he asks of us: we follow him blindly. This in practice is what happened the apostles. After this miracle they followed him to Jerusalem on the feastday, although aware that the leaders of the synagogue wanted to kill him. They remained with him and accompanied him to the Garden of Olives. They experienced no more fear or agitation even though he told them expressly he would be betrayed.

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16. *Dixit ergo Thomas, qui dicitur  
Didymus, ad condiscipulos: Eamus  
et nos, ut moriamur cum eo.*

16. *Thomas, called the Twin, said  
to his fellow disciples, "Let us  
also go, that we may die with  
him."*

The Apostles' trust was not yet perfect; only after the miracle was it perfectly established. But Jesus' all-powerful words always have an effect on souls that are guileless and not too badly disposed; they work according to the dispositions already there. That is why the divine words produced half their effect here. They did not produce in the apostles entire surrender to Jesus' guidance; the apostles were not yet sufficiently disposed for that, their faith was too weak and their hearts too full of all sorts of passions. But these words brought such great generosity that they were ready to follow their good Master even though it could cost them their lives. They still considered that eternal Wisdom was going to commit a great imprudence and expose himself to death but they took the resolution to go and follow him and die with him. At least Thomas suggested this and it seems they accepted his idea.

St. Thomas' words show the extreme attachment they had for their Master – they preferred to die with him rather than live without him. But this attachment was not unmixed. It was not the pure, perfect love that makes people hand themselves over to death for love of our Lord, such as the love that brought all the apostles later on to immolate themselves. The difference was indeed great. In this instance the apostles did not have the profound knowledge of our Lord they acquired at a later date. If they had known him clearly as Son of God they would not have feared for his life. They thought him a man like themselves though much greater and more perfect: he was a prophet, the greatest of the prophets, the very Messiah. This was high esteem but it was not great enough to make them ready to die with him. Thus their generosity of spirit did not even match their esteem for Jesus.

Where then did this sentiment come from? In part it came from an interior grace which drew them with compelling strength towards our Lord and gave them sentiments of very tender love. The Father drew them towards his well-beloved Son with extra force since he wished to make them the elite citizens of his empire. This was the first principle of their attachment but it was

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unseeing. They felt this continual loving attraction very deeply and responded to it enthusiastically both with great gentleness of heart and with deep personal satisfaction. But they understood nothing and did not even reflect on the reason for their tender love for their Master. They experienced great happiness; they followed it as blind men to enjoy it.

There lies the first principle of their love for Jesus Christ, a good but imperfect principle. It is still found nowadays in a great number of those who begin to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and experience these joys and extreme delights of divine love. They give themselves most ardently to this sentiment of love but in large part it is because of the sweetness and happiness they find in it. Later on, when the apostles were handed over to death for their adorable Master and had endured the greatest suffering and travail for love of him, their love was purer and loftier. They loved him less sensibly perhaps but they loved him more strongly, they loved him as Son of God, Redeemer of the world and Sanctifier of all the elect. No longer was it in the midst of joys and delights nor out of desire for the pleasures of holy love and the satisfactions to be found in it that they loved him but in privations, the cross and suffering. Precisely in these did they find their delights and the wherewithal to nourish and inflame them more and more. This also is the state of every fervent soul when it makes progress in the life of divine love.

The second motive or principle of their love for our Lord was the divine charm which penetrated his whole outward bearing and all his relations with them, the tenderness of his charity, the delight they found in his conversation and way of acting in general, the grace of his words, the eminence, holiness and richness of his doctrine, the kindness of his glance, the simplicity transfusing his whole sacred humanity, the gentle seriousness of his approach to things and of all his conduct, the inconceivable goodness of his heart manifested in all circumstances. All these and so many more enticing, divinely attractive traits captivated many hearts which were not given over to the demon; even hearts

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of people who had not the happiness of finding themselves among his close acquaintances were touched.

It was all the truer for the apostles, who were the continual object of his attention, to whom he showed great tenderness in all his contacts with them. This love of theirs, although holy and devout, yet smacked of imperfection. It lasted only while he lived with them in a way they could feel in their senses; there was much natural attachment in it. After his resurrection, and especially after his ascension, their love was much purer and more perfect; what was natural and sensible in it passed and was replaced by a solid stronger love, more lasting, durable and perfect.

The words, 'that we may die with him', could bear another interpretation but the basic meaning would still be the same. St Thomas would have said: let us also go and die with Lazarus. Our Lord has just said that Lazarus was dead, and added: let us go to him. Then St. Thomas, alluding to the death of Lazarus, says: let us also go, let us not abandon our Master even though it means having to die like Lazarus. This meaning seems more natural according to the force of the words but it does not appear to be the evangelist's real meaning.

17. *Venit itaque Jesus; et invenit eum  
quatuor dies jam in monumento  
habentem.*

17. *Now when Jesus came, he  
found that Lazarus had already  
been in the tomb four days.*

Although Jesus was full of tenderness for Mary and Martha, nevertheless he decided to wait four days before consoling them in their great affliction. Why did his gentle compassionate heart not come more promptly to the help of these dear people? He deigned to shed tears at the sight of Mary's sorrow. Why did he not forestall the misfortune in such a way that that good woman would not have had this great affliction? Does it not seem that the Jews were right to say: he who gave sight to the man who went blind, could he not have prevented Lazarus from dying? (verse 37). This is surely the language of worldly people, 'who do not perceive the things that are of the spirit of God'. Our Lord's views

are very different from ours and divine activity always corresponds to his breadth of vision.

The two great principles of all his activity are seen in this deed. The first (is that) in all the works he accomplished on earth he looked only to his Father's glory, before which everything else counted as nothing, everything yielded, everything was sacrificed, even his own life. His Father's glory was what he had to accomplish in everything, according to his Father's eternal will. He loved Mary and Martha, he was full of tenderness for Lazarus and he deigned to manifest his tenderness and compassion through tears. But although he loved them, he loved his Father still more. He loved this devout family only in his Father, for his Father. The divine Father had decreed from all eternity that Lazarus should remain four days in the grave and his sisters in deep affliction for all that period. The revelation of his well beloved Son's power (over death) was intended to promote the Father's glory. Therefore the Son, who always does what pleases his Father, left Lazarus in the tomb and his sisters in sorrow in order to obey the eternal decrees of his Father for his glory.

There is great instruction in this for us who are his disciples and representatives on earth. Nothing should be dear to us in this world except in relationship to our heavenly Father, in him, through him and for him. Everything must be sacrificed unhesitatingly for his glory and to his least good pleasure. When God's glory and holy will ask it of us, our friend Lazarus must be allowed to die, and father, mother, sisters, brothers and friends must be left afflicted. We may suffer from it and be deeply affected and even weep, but we simply must make all our sacrifices with love, joy, peace and an undivided will.

The second principle of Jesus' activity on earth is the salvation and sanctification of souls, particularly of those who are dear to him, whom his heavenly Father specially gives him. He is not afraid to afflict and even overwhelm them with distress when that works to their sanctification. His goodness is immense, but since he has designs of mercy greater and deeper than ours, he

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deliberately leaves us in affliction so that eventually he may fill us with greater and more perfect graces. This happened to these three chosen souls. Lazarus' seeming misfortune and the days of distress and grief for his two sisters were a source of such great graces for them as to amaze them.

We can draw two kinds of fruit from our Saviour's way of acting. The first (is that) when we are in pain and affliction, whatever it may be, we must not fear but count with assurance on his great goodness that, if we are faithful, he will fill us with grace and favours. We must not think he has forgotten, neglected or abandoned us, however long our trouble lasts. We see it clearly. Lazarus' sisters must have thought he had abandoned them and yet he was thinking of them all the time, as we see from his words to his apostles. The second fruit is for those who guide souls. They must not be afraid to cause affliction on occasion to those they have the responsibility of guiding or even to leave them sometimes in pain once they are sure that that will advance them in perfection. They may and even ought to have compassion on their suffering, as the divine Director of directors had, but this compassion must not extend to weakness. When the spiritual good and the sanctification of a soul require it to suffer pain for a while, be it so.

18. *(Erat autem Bethania juxta  
Jerosolymam quasi stadiis  
quindecim.)*

18. *Bethany was near Jerusalem,  
about two miles off,*

19. *Multi autem ex Judaeis venerant  
ad Martham et Mariam, ut con-  
solarentur eas de fratre suo.*

19. *and many of the Jews had come  
to Martha and Mary to console  
them concerning their brother.*

The evangelist notes this circumstance for two reasons. First, to show that the Jews came from Jerusalem and to explain that it was they who went to denounce the miracle to the Pharisees, as will be told later; in the second place, to show why the miracle made such an impression. These circumstances are worth noting



because of the extraordinary consequences they had. It seems that the Holy Spirit, in getting the holy evangelist to note these circumstances, wanted to fix our attention on the ways of divine providence. Providence thus led events along to hasten the accomplishment of our Redemption, the time of which had been decreed for the Passover that followed hard on this event. It was a custom among the Jews, and a great work of mercy highly regarded among them, to console those who were in mourning for the seven days that followed the death of their relative. (This custom still holds among them.)

20. *Martha ergo ut audivit quia Jesus venit, occurrit illi; Maria autem domi sedebat.*

20. *When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary sat in the house.*

Both Martha and Mary had strong living love for our Lord, so much so that it would be difficult to discern in which of the two the love was stronger and more vehement. In Martha it expressed itself vivaciously in everything she said and did. In Mary it had such interior intensity that she is seen to be all consumed and absorbed in it. Yet the love was so different in its effects as to be evident at first glance. The difference arose from the fact that each one's love had not the same characteristics. In Martha it was a passionate sensitive love; in Mary it was peaceful, interior. In Martha divine love acted on the senses turning them towards the divine object of the love of all hearts and in that way left her character intact. It worked in her through continual outbursts. She could keep nothing within, her heart full of divine love was always on her lips and in her hands. There was continual movement, she acted, she spoke, she gave herself no rest.

Where did all this come from? From the love she had in her heart for the Son of God; it acted on her senses, on her passions, making them continually and vividly active. The passions thus impelled by divine love could not rest inactive and so she became very animated because of the liveliness of the love that possessed

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her. This came from the fact that God's love is always active, and that by its nature. On the other hand, passions too are active and can be violent. These impetuous instruments, animated by an act of violent love, produced this excitement in the good saint's words and actions.

Mary, on the contrary, had a quite different love. It damped down and calmed the movement of her passions. Her character underwent great change. She did not have as many emotional outbursts as her sister. It would be hard to say what her character was before this state of love. Her soul was mastered by it, her passions were no longer aroused or but rarely. Only under certain more powerful impulses of love occurring in extraordinary circumstances did she regain all the liveliness and feelings of her temperament and manifest it outwardly. This explains the difference between how she appears here and how we see her at the time of the resurrection, that is supposing, as the church suggests, she is the same person as St Magdalene.

This tender, lively, intense love which appears here and at the beginning of chapter twelve, was concentrated in the depth of her soul, and its action, although strong, ardent and penetrating, normally did not produce these outbursts nor issue forth in action. Rather they inclined the saint's soul to vigorously seek her well-being through contemplation. The fire was violent within but it tended more to interior union than to exterior activity, she acted little, spoke little, but her soul was aflame. In certain circumstances this violent fire showed itself in all its heat, sometimes languidly, sometimes with burning sweetness, as at the beginning of chapter twelve, sometimes with a violent absorption and then an outburst, as at the holy sepulchre. Everything took place according to the different circumstances that stirred up different movements of her heart and according to the activity of divine grace. This produced, as it ordinarily does, different feelings and different forms of expressions according to circumstances. Nevertheless, this woman's spiritual condition, gifted with contemplative love, remains steady in all circumstances.

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Martha's spiritual powers were always active, for she acted only through the movement of her passions triggered by divine love. Mary's spiritual powers were all the time determined by her response of contemplative love. Her actions and words were serious and well-balanced but lively, strong and touching, for she was influenced by the fire of divine love that burned all the time in her soul. Because of the exuberance of Martha's spiritual powers defective words and actions often escaped her, since in the quickness of her response she did not distinguish right from wrong. Her mind let itself be carried along by all its movements the first instant they presented themselves, except no doubt when she saw that a particular impulse was not good. Most often they were good, inspired by the divine love that filled her, but inevitably other less healthy impulses affected her. As Martha was used to intense activity, she often spoke without restraint.

Moreover, this condition of the two saints influenced their whole conduct, even in their affections and natural relationships and in their everyday activity. So it came about that Martha was first to know our Lord had arrived as she was more in contact with the outside world than her sister. Mary remained withdrawn in the house and lived in repose. 'She sat at home'. Another reason: the very different character of divine love in Mary and Martha showed itself here. Both were distressed over their brother's death. Martha, the active one, needed to give vent to her sorrow and could not stay still at home. This meant she had more frequent contacts with the outside world and was first to learn the good news that the Saviour had arrived in Bethany. Mary, on the other hand, whose soul was formed in quite another fashion through her contemplative love, concentrated her sorrow within herself. It may be presumed that her thoughts often turned towards our Lord, taking consolation in him and the love she bore him. She felt no great need to run around outside, accustomed as she was to keeping her soul and affections to herself. She remained in repose ('sat') in the house.

We may suppose that the two sisters expected our Lord not to

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delay in coming, since they had sent him a message about Lazarus' sickness. That may be why Martha's love, impatient to see her Master arrive, impelled her to go frequently and make inquiries. That is how she learned the good news before her sister. Mary, whose love was no less than Martha's, but of another kind, waited in peace and calm until the divine Consolation of Israel would come and strengthen her soul. Her keen burning love furnished her with desires as vehement as Martha's to see the great Consoler of the afflicted arrive to console her. But it is a mark of this contemplative love to form intensely strong desires and affections while at the same time preserving in perfect repose the soul it animates, making it await God's moments gently and tranquilly. 'Mary sat in the house'. As soon as Martha learnt that Jesus had come she went to meet him in the fervour of her love, outside the place where he halted.

21. *Dixit ergo Martha ad Jesum: Domine, si fuisses hic, frater meus non fuisset mortuus.*

21. *Martha said to Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Martha is seen to be concerned about two things. The first is the object of her grief, her brother's death; the second is her great love for our divine Lord. Her grief was tempered by this love, something which is a great consolation for an afflicted soul. It seems that throughout the time our Lord was not there the two sisters harboured the thought that if he had been there he would have healed their brother. His absence hurt them deeply, for the first word to him was, 'If you had been here'. It shows how fully these two good women loved our Lord. It also shows their great faith and limitless trust in him. They knew Jesus loved them; if he had been there he would not have allowed Lazarus to die. It is a great happiness for a soul to know that one is loved by Jesus; such knowledge becomes an abundant source of limitless confidence.

22. *Sed et nunc scio, quia quaecumque poposceris a Deo, dabit tibi Deus.*

22. *And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."*

In verse 32 Mary will say the same thing as Martha says in verse 21, but without the addition of verse 22. In this also their different types of piety appear. Martha's thought is active, she expresses everything that is on her mind. Mary's thought is contemplative, she does not feel she has to wear her heart on her sleeve, she says fewer words, her heart expands before her Lord; the Son of God sees within. Martha's second thought is really included in her first one, but the love in her heart never felt it had expressed the sentiments of its faith and trust sufficiently. This was because her love was characterized by tangible activity. Mary on the other hand hardly gave consideration to saying these things aloud; her mind did not contain a multiplicity of ideas; she said little of what was in her mind, her main discourse was of the heart, which does not express itself in a torrent of words and ideas. Indeed, words are few and far between, but this holy communing consists in the propensity of love, which in Mary's case was a contemplative love.

In the active love of a Martha the soul loves and acts strongly, the mind is involved as well as the heart; but all is impelled by love. In contemplative love the soul of a Mary gathers itself together and becomes unified. It receives the heavenly influence of grace and submits to its divine workings, it is in utter repose, all its powers are in deep sleep in the arms of its Beloved, enjoying his divine love. This is not an idle repose, it acts strongly, but its activity is not its own nor the outcome of its own strength and movement. Rather is it drawn along by its feelings; it surrenders to this attraction and runs after its Beloved, joined and bound to him in contemplation – at the same time as it were, lifeless and motionless. In fact the only life this soul has – is in and through the love it has for its Beloved. He draws it after him and it runs because of his drawing-power, letting itself be drawn along wholeheartedly. It is strengthened, given life, touched and consoled by the marvellous odour of the delightful varied perfumes that its Beloved spreads over it through his divine love.

Martha says, 'now I know', to show that her faith is the same

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even though the Saviour did not work the miracle on her brother's behalf. This shows the goodness of these souls, the truth and purity of their love. Not the least whisper of a murmur against our Lord arises in them. They had informed him beforehand of the misfortune that threatened, they must still have thought that he had declined to come. Yet they make not the least complaint. The Jews complained, as verse 37 will soon demonstrate, because their faith was half-hearted and not enlivened by true love. But the two sisters acquiesced without a trace of annoyance, for love was in their hearts. Perhaps one could also take the word of the two sisters, 'If you had been here', as a prayer: Lord, why did you not come to save my brother, you who love him so greatly? But these words are not a rebuke: this is obvious from Mary's movement and from the words Martha adds: 'Although, Lord, you did not come, yet I know your Father will give you what you ask of him'. The words indicate that Martha had no clear understanding of our Saviour's divinity. She took him for a great prophet, for the Messiah. She speaks of his power to work miracles as if he had it by dint of praying, like the prophets. Perhaps her idea of our Lord's divinity was so confused that she could not be specific, as we shall see in a moment.

23. *Dixit illi Jesus: Resurget frater tuus.* 23. *Jesus said to her: "Your brother will rise again."*

Lazarus' two sisters so full of love for our Lord could not fail to have their prayers heard. Martha's prayer obtained the assurance that their prayers were answered and Mary's was followed by the miracle. Our Lord's outstanding goodness to those who are dear to him was made clear. The two sisters did not even dare to ask him to raise their brother; they contented themselves with saying that if he had been there Lazarus would not have died. At the same time they showed their faith and love, and their tacit prayer was heard all the same. Lazarus was raised. Our Lord's heart was touched by this good woman's grief, so he addressed that word to

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her to console her. There is a big difference between Jesus' love for Mary and his love for Martha. Martha's grief elicits words of consolation and a promise, Mary's draws tears as well as fruitful and enriching consolations.

24. *Dicit ei Martha: Scio quia resurget  
in resurrectione in novissimo die.*

24. *Martha said to him, "I know  
that he will rise again in the  
resurrection at the last day."*

Martha's answer is open to two interpretations. Aware that our Lord addressed these words to her for her consolation, she did not take them for the promise of an imminent resurrection but as a thought capable of consoling her. It was as if he had told her to take heart over this loss since her brother would rise one day. She replied, 'I know for sure he will rise in the great resurrection on the last day'. In the second place – and this seems more consonant with the sacred text – one could say she took our Lord's words as a promise of resurrection; at least she had a vague idea of it, it was only that her faith was very weak on the point. She well knew her beloved Master's power, she sincerely believed in it, as she will soon indicate (verse 27), but this faith of hers was speculative, general; when it came to applying it to her brother, her mind became lost. It was not exactly that she was against believing our Lord was going to raise him but she did not cling to his divine word, she hesitated about surrendering to it trustfully. This was because her brother was dead for four days and she could not accommodate the idea of seeing him return to life, all the less so since she had not yet seen a like miracle performed.

Besides, her head was thinking about many things, especially in her present circumstances, which meant she did not give our Lord's words the importance they deserved and did not attend to them as she should have. This accounts for her answer as recorded in the gospel. She heard our Lord saying her brother would rise and she replied, 'You say he will rise; that I know, but it will be at the great resurrection, and not now; meanwhile, he is no more

with us'. It is to be noted that our Lord did not say he was going to raise Lazarus but that Lazarus would rise. He did not perceive that Martha's dispositions were sufficiently perfect to explain things openly. Perhaps he was also trying her faith; if he had said categorically that he willed to raise Lazarus, she would have believed him.

25. *Dixit ei Jesus: Ego sum resurrectio et vita; qui credit in me, etiamsi mortuus fuerit, vivet.*

25. *Jesus said to her "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live,*

26. *Et qui vivit, et credit in me non morietur in aeternum. (Credis hoc?)*

26. *and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? "*

Jesus' divine goodness wished to stir up Martha's faith. The heavenly words he spoke had the direct effect of healing her weakness. Now she resembled all souls whose devotional state is at the level of the senses. As long as these people receive graces from our Lord that encourage them and draw them along smoothly to him, they are full of trust and love. At times they can even be engrossed and at such moments nothing is incredible. They pick up hints in our Lord's words, they incline to believe more than what he says rather than be incredulous or have the least doubt. But let the divine Master's will take a line that ruffles their sensitivity or fails to act with consummate gentleness and these same souls change radically, even if they maintain a basic orientation of love towards the divine Master. They become agitated and worried about what causes the pain, their sentiments of faith become blurred and mixed with suspicion. They believe in God's promise, but in a general way. In this faith they are not unified in full surrender to our Lord. All their sentiments of faith lie hazily in their minds, not adhering to God with any strength of will. They had been used to the felt attraction that drew them along towards their divine Master; no longer experiencing this drawing power, they become confused.

This seems to be Martha's condition. She had a tangible, passionate love, as we said above. When things were in harmony with this love, nothing was stronger than her faith. She sent a message to her beloved master, 'Master, he whom you love is sick'. She counted sincerely on the goodness of him whom she loved much and by whom she knew she was loved; enlivened by this love, her faith furnished her with unbounded trust. Her hope let her down; her brother died. She knew very well that it was not for want of love that Jesus had let her brother die. Yet that did not prevent her great sorrow from preoccupying her mind strongly and withholding her love from full development in her beloved's presence. All the same her love persisted. She was uneasy, she awaited the divine Saviour impatiently. As soon as she learnt he had come, she ran to him for consolation.

But her faith was too unclear and her mind too preoccupied to stand by her divine Master in total surrender to him. This is what she should have done if she was to receive the devout consolation she sought. But Jesus in his infinite goodness and great love for her wished to heal her. In place of this vague faith in revealed truths, he concentrated the Saint's mind on himself as sole source of perfect faith, in whom all the truths that constitute the object of our faith are contained as in their essence.

Furthermore, he drew her heart towards himself, troubled as it was by the affliction that engrossed it. He would put life into it by filling it with his holy calm. When we are troubled like that and our faith is weak, it is imperative to remain in union with Jesus to find what we lack ourselves. That is why our Lord said, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. See the great grace that is offered to you, Martha; raise your spirits, do not forget yourself to the point of despair. Do not let your heart give in to so much anxiety nor your mind to all sorts of possibilities. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Fix your mind on him with lively faith and let your heart rest confidently on his.

Our Lord says he is the resurrection. What were we before he came? We could never have raised ourselves from death. He is our

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resurrection by the faith he imprints in our souls, whereby he begins to draw us to himself and grants us his grace. He is our life by the perfect charity he communicates. But be it noted that he does not say he raises and gives life but that he is the resurrection itself and the life itself that is within us. These are strong words, they show us that Jesus is in us from when we rise; and if we have life perfectly it is because Jesus lives perfectly in us. Jesus, then, is the beginning and end in us, the alpha and the omega. He is all things in us. Whenever he is not in us we have no life, we are dead people.

How is this to be understood that Jesus is our resurrection and our life in this way? One can grasp that he is our resurrection, for he draws us out of our spiritual death and unites us to himself by the faith that gives us life. Our resurrection does not start with us, for we do nothing to rise from the dead. A dead person has nothing within that could activate life; otherwise he or she would not be dead. Similarly we have nothing within us that could be a source of resurrection, since everything in us is dead by definition, that is to say, lifeless. We have within us no movement that tends of itself to give us life, or even helps us to come to life.

It follows that our whole resurrection consists in this that our divine Saviour draws us and gives us back life, (by) breathing life into us, just as we received bodily life by the infusion of our souls (into our bodies) at our creation, and that without our cooperation. Certainly we can dispose ourselves; indeed our divine resurrection demands that preparation. But, for all that, it is no less true that the recall from death to life is accomplished by the drawing-force of our divine Master and the outpouring of life he gives. In this way we can say he is our resurrection itself. We rise only by possessing him within us by faith; he is the principle of both this union and the attraction of faith.

But how can he be our very life? It says at the beginning of this gospel: 'In him was life and the life was the light of men'. All life was contained in the Word of God. Since the word became incarnate all life is in our Lord's sacred humanity. This life consists

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first in the divine essence of the Son of God, who possesses the Father's essential life. This life is incommunicable. Only the Son of God's sacred humanity can have this essential life, not by a particular operation carried out in its own depths but by its personal union with the divine Word. This union means that everything that pertains to the Word belongs also to the sacred humanity. The Saviour is not referring to this life when he says to Martha, 'I am the life'; he is only speaking of the life he transmits to human beings. This second life is the one he communicates to creatures: the life of grace in this world, the life of glory in the next. This life is nothing other than the communication of the divinity to his creatures by means of our adorable Saviour's sacred humanity.

As Head of all rational creatures, his sacred humanity receives the divine life in a way no intelligence can fathom, so as to communicate it in grace on earth and glory in heaven. 'He bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus... in heaven and on earth' and so on (Ph 2:9-10). The name of Jesus is above every power and principality, seeing that he is Head of every creature. Jesus is the name of the sacred human being; this human being was subjected to circumcision, and with it the divine Word. This sacred human being achieved our salvation by the cross, and with it was the divine Word. The heavenly kingdom is at his feet to receive glory from him, the earthly to receive grace and hell to receive judgment. This life of the Word in the sacred humanity is a life of love, according to the text: 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son' (Jn 3:16). The giving of the Son of God to the earth, that is, the Incarnation for that is how Isaiah speaks of it: 'a Son is given to us (Is 9:6). This a work of divine love carried out by the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you' (Lk 1:35).

The life of the Word in the sacred humanity is then a life of love. It must be remembered that the divine Incarnation of the Word in the sacred humanity was not a passing act of the Holy Spirit, it would last forever. For all eternity the Father will be begetting his

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Son and for all eternity the Holy Spirit will be uniting the sacred humanity to him. This is an act of love, the Father's love for humanity in general – 'God so loved the world' – and the sacred humanity of his Son in particular. 'The Father loves the Son and gave all things into his hands' (Jn 3:35). What does 'all things' mean if not his divine Word and with his Word all that exists?

The life of the Word in his human nature is communicated to us by Jesus' love, as active love whereby he draws us to himself and gives us a part in this great treasure. This is an eternal action in continuity with the divine deed that keeps us united to him and communicates divine life to us. All this is done by God for the sacred humanity, in perfect harmony with what is done by the Son for us. On the other hand, there is the same resemblance between what is done by Jesus for God and what is done by us for the Son of God.

The Incarnation was an operation of the Holy Spirit and will remain so for all eternity. The Holy Spirit does not work on the Word, since he receives his essence from the essence of the Father and the Son – 'He will take what is mine' (cf Jn 16:14) but he works on the sacred humanity of Jesus. The Father begets his Word in the sacred humanity in a fashion no creature can understand, and the divine Word is thus united by his own power to the all-holy all-pure humanity. Although he can be begotten only by his Father, his power contributes as much as his Father's in his union with the sacred humanity. But the Holy Spirit has no part in the order of the Word's eternal generation, so he cannot influence this divine Person in his generation in time.

How then has he brought about the Incarnation except by working on the sacred humanity, uniting it to the Word? This was the most perfect work ever performed by the Holy Spirit or ever to be performed. Now the perfect operations of the Holy Spirit are operations of love. So the life of the Word is in the sacred humanity because of its union in love with the divinity. Just as no creature can understand this union and love, likewise divine life in the Son of man is beyond words and understanding. In lesser



forms and to different degrees the same thing takes place in us through the Incarnate Son of God. When the Holy Spirit wishes us to share in the life of the Word, which is the life of Jesus Christ's sacred humanity, he unites us to the Son of God also by his bond of charity.

Thus as the Father begets his Son in the sacred humanity so the Incarnate Son of God communicates this divine life to us, the same life which he has given to the sacred humanity to share fully by the working of the same Holy Spirit. This communication will last as long as our bond of charity lasts. In this world the bond of charity is a bond of grace, Jesus' life in us is a life of grace; in the next world the bond of charity is a bond of glory and Jesus will live in us in glory. Charity remains for ever, even in eternity, St Paul says, for it unites us to Jesus so that he can receive his life. After all this we can understand what our divine Saviour says in the two preceding verses.

He is the resurrection; no dead soul rises unless Jesus unites himself to it and gives it life. When this happens a soul will issue from its state of death and be capable of movement and activity in the supernatural order, which is the only order of things in which life is genuine. In the second place, Jesus says he is the life. Having Jesus within himself, the believer can still act by reason of a power other than that of the divine resurrection, but then its actions would not be truly living deeds. They would resemble, in the order of natural human affairs, things done inattentively, inadvertently or involuntarily; they would not be fully human actions, for the spirit would not have been involved in them. But we can be united to Jesus by the infused habit of love, which inclines our heart towards him uninterruptedly, making it cleave, so to say, to his adorable Person in his sacred humanity. Then, through Jesus' humanity and through the holy mysteries that were accomplished in it and through it, we receive the fullness of this life. It is poured out into our hearts and develops in our actions; our works in turn become truly living deeds.

The soul has the principle of life from the moment it is raised up.

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This guarantees that it is not dead, but neither is it full and perfect until it shows itself in deeds. How can life that gives no movement to the body be called full life? The same holds for the soul. When the soul acts in consequence of its union with Jesus, Jesus is its life. He has communicated the divine life of the Word to it, which keeps on actively developing. Everything vital in our activity is Jesus' life; he is in us, he is vitality itself.

It could be said also that the Son of God is our life in another sense. He is the life-principle we receive in our resurrection from death. We were dead and he becomes our resurrection in that he becomes our life by infusing the divine life into our souls through his grace. If our Lord uses these two words which seem to have the same meaning, he does so to explain his point from two angles: first, the movement that brings us to life, 'the resurrection', then life itself, which is the source of our resurrection, 'and the life'.

Our divine Saviour adds, 'he who believes in me...' He says, 'in me', which indicates faith animated by charity, the soul's real union with him. Belief is not enough to produce resurrection. Martha believed that the Son of God could raise people from the dead, but she was not steadfast in these opinions and interior dispositions. This shows that her charity lacked perfection at that moment, for it must be noted that whenever faith weakens, charity weakens as well. 'Though he die, yet shall he live'. The one who has this faith will live by faith itself because, being joined to our Lord, he or she will share in the Lord's life. This explains the word 'resurrection'. Jesus becomes our resurrection if we have this faith in our lifegiver.

A single act of perfect faith brings about our resurrection because this decision unites us immediately with him and thereby gives us his life. No living person will die, who 'believes in Jesus'. Having been raised up by him, everyone who constantly turns to Jesus and whose spirit acts by reason of the divine life within, in accordance with the bond of faith and love with the one who communicates this life, will live forever. The divine life will not

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forsake such a one as long as he or she perseveres in this holy union with the sovereign author of life who is life itself. In this world it will be a life of grace, in the next a life of glory.

That is why the divine Master says, 'forever'. Life remains the same even though its form will undergo great modifications. Its source will be the same in heaven as on earth. Jesus will always be our life, our life of glory as he is our life of grace. The life of grace is the germ, the life of glory the fruit the germ produces. Those who live and believe in Jesus will never die. One may infer that divine Wisdom means they will never die as long as they believe in him (that is to say, as long as their faith is enlivened by charity, for to believe 'in' him means to have perfect faith enlivened by charity and that always includes hope. The text does not say: 'He who believes will not die', this would mean that the life of grace could nevermore be lost. But it says, 'he who lives', that is, who has received the life of grace, 'and believes', that is, whose faith is also a living faith, will not die. The fact that this life cannot be lost does not arise because this kind of life is available but rather from the existence of faith, provided it is perfect faith.

To believe the truths taught by the Son of God is not enough, that is, to believe the Son of God, to believe what he says. Martha believed all of that, yet the Incarnate Word wanted something more from this holy woman. He wanted her to believe 'in the Son of God', 'in me'. He wanted the full surrender of her heart with all its powers. The resurrection is promised to those alone who give themselves to the Lord in this way; after that, eternal life cannot be lost.

One difficulty remains. The Son of God says that those who live and believe will live forever. This could mean one could be alive without this faith. It could mean that without this faith in him one is not only unsure of living forever, but that life eternal could easily be lost? Consequently, one could live without having faith. This is true, for the divine Master only speaks here of the faith that works in a soul strengthened by grace and divine attraction, and which enables one to surrender completely to the Son of God by faith enlivened by charity which join one to him.



This activity of the spirit gives it life and, once it is living, keeps it alive. It is impossible that someone should be given over to the Lord and at the same time be engaged in activity that would cause it to lose its life. The word 'believe' sufficiently indicates the decision whereby the believer adheres to his divine Saviour.

The theme of this instruction given to Martha is death, resurrection and perseverance in life in the spiritual sense, meaning of the soul. Nevertheless it is perfectly applicable to the circumstance in which Martha found herself. She could obtain for her brother Lazarus who was bodily dead the same result as would benefit souls, not as regards the continuity of life but as regards the promise of resurrection. She should have united herself to our Lord, received his word of grace docilely and surrendered to him confidently. The divine goodness wished this to happen by means of his gentle words: to bring peace to the poor afflicted woman, to calm her spirits, concentrate her mind on himself, who is the only life of souls, and unite her to himself in loving, trustful surrender.

Our Lord added to these divine words: 'Do you believe this?' He treats his friends with kindness beyond description. This follows his normal procedure with people. He wished to draw Martha to himself, but by a perfect loving faith, trustful and capitulating. This good woman was far from that, on the contrary she was quite perturbed, as was said above. So he began by being most gentle in the holy word he used. He calmed her senses, which were agitated by sadness and pain. Once that was accomplished she would be disposed to fix her attention on him, listen to him and be led on. At this point Jesus gives one a certain amount of faith to make one believe the truth, to help one visualise the virtue and degree of perfection he wants one to have. Souls touched by faith in this way do not reach perfection from the start; before that, they develop deep faith in these qualities. This faith binds them more to our Lord and little by little makes them conformable to the outlook our divine Lord offers them. This in its turn becomes something they believe in.

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Our Saviour's particular goodness towards this woman is evident here. After telling her the fact (of the resurrection and eternal life - ed.), not only did he stir up faith in her heart but he exhorted her by his words. (It is to be noted that an interior grace always corresponds to the Saviour's words.) Not only did he stir Martha up by his words, but he put them in the form of a question so as to get her to make an act of faith. Deliberate acts like these strengthen the soul considerably in faith.

27. *Ait illi: Utique, Domine, ego credidi, quia tu es Christus Filius Dei vivi, qui in hunc mundum venisti.*

27. *She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."*

The Saviour's word produced its effect. Martha refound all her old fervour and made an excellent confession of faith. It is evident that her heart accepted the truth the Saviour had just proclaimed, she was now fully committed to him. The assurance with which she professed her faith showed it. 'Certainly, Lord, I believe'. A moment before her mind had been unclear, her heart wavering. Now she was excited: 'Certainly, Lord, I believe'. The words, 'I have believed', in the past tense signify the present. This is quite common in the language of the Hebrews. 'I believe', she says, 'that you are the Son of God, who has come into this world'. One sees here the light of our Lord's divine word cast into this soul. A while earlier she had said, 'I know that all you ask from God he will give you'. Now she says, 'You are the Son of God, who has come into this world'. This follows on what divine Wisdom has just said, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. Martha did not understand this language; yet the words, accompanied by interior grace, shed such a ray of brightness into her mind that she could see the great light that was becoming clearer to her.

This good person, then, saw something but could not grasp exactly what she saw. Although she confessed the divinity of the Son of God, she did not understand how it was so. She knew nothing of the Incarnation. Perfect knowledge of the union of the

Son of God with the Son of man was reserved for the day of Pentecost; before that, the only ones to have this knowledge were the Blessed Virgin, St John the Baptist and St Joseph. Yet it seems likely from the words she uses, 'who has come into the world', that St Martha had some knowledge at that moment. If she had understood the words, 'Son of God', in a vague sense, meaning only a prophet or a just man, it is not clear why she should add, 'who has come into the world'. She felt that the Saviour had not always been in this world, that he had come from the bosom of God. But her mind was not concerned with how this came about, no more than with other great difficulties that would naturally arise.

When we know the activity of grace in souls we are not surprised that she did not try to obtain clearer knowledge on this important point. What happens is this. Whenever divine grace gives us an interior enlightenment by some strong impression, that enlightenment, although obscure, inflames our whole mind, especially when the impression is strongly felt. The mind thus inflamed is thrilled with this obscure, vague clarification in a felt way, it is so taken up with what it sees and the enjoyment thereof that the idea does not even occur to examine the matter and look at it more closely.

This was Martha's condition and that of all people to whom our Lord gave this faint understanding of his divinity before his ascension. In this state of affairs curiosity does not arise; and if it does, grace is no longer felt so strongly. Curiosity succeeds in lessening grace and obscuring its point of view. Then nature commonly takes the upper hand and the believer parts from our Lord. This misfortune often happened the Jews. You see a certain number of them following him for a long time and finishing up by leaving him, while his faithful disciples seek not so much to understand as to believe most trustfully in their Master. The greatest obstacle to the perfection of faith is wanting to understand what one gets a glimpse of; in this matter natural curiosity and scrutinizing inquiry ruin everything. 'The one who

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scrutinizes majesty will be overcome by glory' (cf Prov. 25:27 Vulg.)

It could also be understood that the phrase, 'I believe', refers to the past tense. Martha, whose soul was animated by a livelier faith through our Lord's clarifying words, says, 'Certainly, Lord, I believe what you say. Even when I hesitated a moment ago, when I was unclear, I also believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'. This explanation presupposes that Martha never ceased to believe that our Lord was the Son of God. If she had said a little earlier that he could obtain by prayer all that he asked, she said it in a moment of obscurity, pain and sadness, without attaching strict meaning to the words; at heart her belief had been there all the time.

28. *Et cum haec dixisset, abiit et vocavit Mariam sororem suam silentio dicens: Magister adest, et vocat te.*

28. *When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."*

It could have been because Martha was naturally vivacious that she went at once to look for her sister after this short conversation with our Lord but her action seems to have been inspired by a movement of the Spirit in her heart. The believer, having received the word of consolation and feeling strengthened, could not keep this encouragement for herself alone, could not rest easy doing this. Off she went at once full of joy to inform her sister so that she too could come and see the Lord. She told her the Master had called her. Martha may have guessed this from the affection Jesus had for Mary. On leaving our Lord she probably said she was going to fetch her sister, and then it was natural that she should tell her sister the Lord was calling her. 'The Lord is there and he calls you', which means: he is waiting for you. There was no need for him to have said so explicitly.

Martha said this quietly, that is to say, she said it privately, in such a way that those who were around did not notice. The reason she acted secretly like this was that she wished Mary to be able to

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Speak to the divine Consoler alone without being surrounded by people. That may also be why she left our Lord so brusquely, in order to obtain for her sister the consolation of talking with him at her ease before he entered the town. Normally he was surrounded by quite a crowd of followers. Martha counted on coming back with her sister to enjoy at leisure the great peace which the couple of words she had just heard had already spread in her heart.

29. *Illa ut audivit surgit cito, et venit ad eum.*

29. *And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.*

30. *Nondum enim venerat Jesus in castellum, sed erat in illo loco, ubi occurrerat ei Martha.*

30. *Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.*

The few words Martha said to Mary gave her all the energy of a loving heart like her own. She had been sad and depressed; the Jews had come to console her, but someone burning with love for Jesus cannot be consoled by human beings. The very name of her Master imbued her with more life and energy than all the most eloquent human conversation. She rose briskly to follow her sister without a word to anyone, as seems clear from what the Jews made of her move. The name of her Master so possessed her that she forgot everything in order to enter the presence of him who was the sole object of her love and alone capable of consoling her.

Jesus' divine goodness awaited her in the same spot where Martha had spoken to him. This is the way our loving Master does things. He waits for people. He does not come himself or (act) in such a way that nothing remains for them to do, but he waits for them and in waiting he draws them to himself with infinite goodness. He possesses an inner gentleness which attracts though he sometimes draws them to himself by events which occur by divine providence. That was how he drew the shepherds, the Magi, Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, St Andrew and the other disciple of St John the Baptist and a host of others. And when these people follow the attraction of his divine love faithfully and come to him he fills them with graces and favours.

He said as much to the Jews in a passage we have already seen: 'I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' (Jn 12:32). The Father's eternal Word draws the sacred humanity and unites it to himself. By this wonderful union the divine Word becomes flesh and dwells bodily in it, as St Paul says, enables it to share perfectly in the divinity. This wonderful human being, through the divine power dwelling substantially in him, draws us to himself and, by the holy union in which he binds us, communicates the divine life, of which he has the fulness.

The divinity of the Word did not come to the humanity of the Son of Mary for, however perfect and marvellous this holy and lovable humanity is, the divinity could not go out of itself, as it were, to join itself to the sacred humanity, which is so infinitely inferior to it. God could not go out of his immense, infinite perfection to join himself to imperfection. For the adorable humanity of Jesus, Son of Mary, however great, however pure, however holy, however lovable or however perfect, is imperfect compared to the divinity of the Word. The gulf between the human nature and the divine is so great that it loses its (human) personhood because of its union with the Word.

It is evident, therefore, that the Word could not come to the sacred humanity (i.e. to existing human person – ed.) to unite itself to it, but in the womb of the most pure and immaculate Virgin Mary the Word took the substance of that humanity, created a soul worthy of being intimately united to it, endowed it with splendour, beauty and riches so immense that it is impossible for any creature ( except, perhaps , Mary) to look on it without being blinded and overcome. This came about by the operation of the Holy Spirit. He formed the body of this heavenly human being and created a soul worthy of being united to it. Finally, he united body and soul to the divine Word.

Thus the Word does not enter into the body and soul of Jesus, Son of Mary, but rather unites them to himself, thereby making them forever the object of love and adoration of all the children of God. If St Paul says the Son of God emptied himself, this is not

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contrary to what has just been said. This emptying takes place. The Word was equal to the Father from all eternity, rendering him his substantial, essential and infinite due precisely because he was equal to the Father. But on uniting to himself the sacred humanity, he joins himself to a created being which in its status as a creature and servant of its God ought to render him its due as a servant who of himself is nothing. And indeed this wonderful human being never ceased and never will cease for an instant to give the Father the honour and service due to him. Now all this honour and service is given by the divine Word (made flesh – ed.) so it is true that the Word took the form of a servant and emptied himself.

Now to explain more fully what we are talking about. The Son of God (the Word - ed.) establishes a similar union with us to that he has with the sacred humanity drawn from Mary's womb, except that this union with us is less perfect and is accomplished precisely through the sacred humanity. Through this holy union with us brought about by means of the sacred humanity united to the divine Word, divine life is communicated to us. Hence, the Son of God (the Word – ed.) does not come to us but draws us to himself, as by divine power he drew so perfectly the sacred humanity to himself. Of course our humanity is less attractive than the humanity of Jesus. This sacred humanity was drawn and is drawn really and eternally (to the Word - ed.), and that by a special unique law established for it alone. In our case it is a by a common supernatural law that we are drawn and united to the sacred humanity and by it and with it to the divine Word.

The law which drew the sacred humanity (into union with the Word - ed.) is a law founded by its nature on the absolute and unique decree of the divine will without any human intervention. In our case, our union with the divine Word is founded on a special decision by God – not on his eternal and immutable will. Our consent is required. That of itself suffices to make clear the imperfection of our union, for everything that stems from the creature is imperfect; our will is capable of nothing but imperfect choices.

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Thus the more divine participation is found in our union, the more perfect it is, and the more our will predominates it is more imperfect. The divine will attracts (us to the Word - ed.) through the grace that the sacred humanity communicates to us. This grace brings about this union. It comes about through the movement of our heart towards the one who draws us. This takes place through faith, hope and charity. From all this it follows that Jesus does not come to us or into us but rather draws us to himself. Once we are united to him he becomes our life by communicating his life to us, a life which is the same as that of the Father and is in him substantially through the Word.

This he does even by his public actions, for his public course of action is as effective as that which he carries out in hearts ready to welcome him. He makes use of the grace, which he gives them to draw them to himself. Sometimes as in the case in question he grants it in other ways to draw us to himself. This is clear in other incidents. Thus he made use of the angels to draw the shepherds, of the star to attract the Magi, of a providential circumstance to win the heart of the Samaritan woman as he made use of Philip's love for Nathanael and of Martha for Mary. He is Master of his gifts, he uses them as he wishes. Then when people obey his voice and respond to his attraction, he works more perfectly in them and communicates in abundance the divine life he possesses.

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| 31. <i>Judaei ergo qui erant cum ea in domo, et consolabantur eam, cum vidissent Mariam quia cito surrexit et exiit, secuti sunt eam dicentes: Quia vadit ad monumentum, ut ploret ibi.</i> | 31. <i>When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.</i> |
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The suddenness and briskness of Mary's move under the impulse of divine love surprised the Jews. She had been sitting quietly, probably saying nothing, sad and overcome by the weight of her sorrow. Her sadness was probably the greater for the thought: if the Master had been here my poor brother would still be living. Listless and lifeless, she suddenly recovered all her

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nervous energy. She rose and was off ignoring the people who had come to console her, not even addressing them a single word. This surprised them. The sudden change they saw in her they could only attribute to the depth of her sorrow, since they did not know what else had caused it. They believed, perhaps, that some distressing thought had taken sudden hold of her and that she was gone to weep at her brother's grave.

The poor Jews, unclear about what was going on in this woman's heart, mistook for overwhelming sorrow what love was doing within her. Martha's move was mingled with sorrow at the thought of her brother but at the same time grace had enlivened her heart and drawn her to our Lord. The distressed woman came to life again at the thought of finding herself in her Saviour's presence. She had been overwhelmed by great sadness because the one who was dearest to her, who alone could comfort and console her was absent. For four days she was despondent, almost lifeless. When she learnt Jesus had come, she ran quickly to pour out her feelings lovingly to him and so find some reassurance.

32. *Maria ergo, cum venisset ubi erat  
Jesus, videns eum, cecidit ad pedes  
ejus et dicit ei: Domine, si fuisses hic,  
non esset mortuus frater meus.*

32. *Then Mary, when she came  
where Jesus was and saw him,  
fell at his feet, saying to him,  
"Lord, if you had been here my  
brother would not have died."*

Mary was used to receiving great favours while kneeling beside the Saviour, as she liked to do. Already once before, at the first moment when grace drew her to her well-beloved, she found the secret of placing herself at his feet with humble burning love. Because of this she obtained forgiveness of all her sins and the promise of her own resurrection. Now she would seek the resurrection of her brother. Once again she is at Jesus' feet to listen to his words as well as receive great graces which would enable her to grow more and more in divine love. While Mary was apart from Jesus she was sad, lonely, hurting badly. When she was not in Jesus' presence her heart felt so like stone she was deeply



depressed. As soon as she saw her well-beloved, she burst into tears – a great release – touched by grace.

This is normal in hearts moved by divine love. In their deepest prayer they kneel at their divine Master's feet. Love rather than humility places them in that posture as they respond to divine graces working within them. The movement of grace is so strong and the love inspiring it so intense that the heart, despite its burning love, is more passive than active. This passive reaction which affects the soul deeply is expressed visually in the posture of prostration at our Lord's feet. In imagination it means one sees oneself prostrate at the divine Master's feet, whether one is standing or sitting, as if in a mirror. This image is received, it would seem, from an outside source, a result of that same movement of grace. At the same time as it acts on the heart, it sets the imagination to work.

Mary's action of casting herself at our Lord's feet arose from this. It took place spontaneously through the outpouring of divine love acting powerfully upon her, producing strong feelings and acting on her imagination as well. From her imagination this impulse led to action. She hardly realised what she was doing, since her feelings were so strong. Mary's total response came as a result of the movement of love that filled her heart. The evangelist's phrase puts it well: 'she fell at his feet'. Mary is overwhelmed by affliction. When she learns that her great friend is there, grace touches her deeply. This strong movement of divine grace that stirred up her love changes her feelings of sadness and distress. Whereas she had been sad, in very low spirits, before grace had touched her, once she felt drawn to Jesus she became energetic and active. The divine love given her found expression in what she said and did. Brought to life by this powerful feeling she comes and, as soon as she sees her well-beloved, love takes over and she throws herself at his feet.

Clearly this interior grace inspired her and produced this spontaneous gesture. At first she was overcome by her grief because of the tragic occasion, but her actions were an expression

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of the divine love touching her heart. Mary allowed herself to be carried along by her grief. The burning impulse of grace and divine love within her impelled her to throw herself at the feet of Jesus, her one and only love and true Consoler.

Streams of tears flowed from her eyes. The source of her tears was the tragic event (of her brother's death). At the same time the gift of divine love released her tears so she wept copiously. Perhaps the reason for this new sensitivity and abundance of tears was her remembering our Lord's great love for Lazarus as well as recalling the regret she had felt that our Lord was absent at the time of her brother's sickness. The words she said to her divine consoler seem to indicate this.

But these words could also have been uttered as a consequence of the great love welling up in her at that moment. This is all the more possible since this thought (of Jesus' absence) had preoccupied the two sisters before our Lord came. Her loving outpouring of sorrow reflects this state of mind before her spirits were lifted by the infusion of divine grace. This explanation seems quite likely. The impression that the Saviour coming had so obviously made on her turned her mind from these regrets. It turned her mind away from those thoughts which caused her such deep sorrow. The tears and cleansing of her feelings did not spring from grief. These tears which renewed her spirits were not caused by another surge of grief. The thought of Jesus' absence was no longer vivid enough to produce great sadness and tears; it could no longer upset her deeply.

33. *Jesus ergo, ut vidit eam plorantem  
et Judaeos, qui venerant cum ea,  
plorantes, infremuit spiritu et  
turbavit seipsum.*

33. *When Jesus saw her weeping,  
and the Jews who came with her  
also weeping, he was deeply  
moved in spirit and troubled;*

The object of our Lord's tears could not have been Lazarus' death, since he knew he was going to raise him from the dead. Besides, to be deprived of the pleasure of a friend could not bring our Lord to tears; no one could believe that. He never willed to

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take pleasure in creatures but only in his Father's glory as it was accomplished in and through creatures. Thus the evangelist is careful to note the reason: 'when he saw her weeping'. These words indicate three causes for the divine Master's tears. The first was his kindness to Mary. He adapted himself to her weakness, to her present condition, and entered into her feelings to fill her with divine grace. Her heart was overcome by grief, she felt the weight of human weakness, which in her condition was more than she could bear. Since Mary had an extremely sensitive heart, she was more deeply affected than others would have been in the same circumstances.

Divine goodness had compassion on her and was willing to pour tears on her sorrow. This meant an outpouring of grace into her soul that would bring with it deep comfort. To see a kind person touched by our affliction and weeping with us is most comforting; through it we regain the strength to accept our misfortune. How much more must the Son of God's tears have produced grace in Mary's heart to ease the pain as did the affection she experienced sanctify her.

Mary had been in a state of depression and overcome by grief, and it showed. With unheard of goodness, the Son of God adapts himself to our condition. He makes himself small and poor with us in order to sanctify us in the situation in which he finds us. That is why he became man, to be able to enter into our littleness and poverty. That is what St Paul meant when he said, 'We have a high priest who is able to sympathise', that is to say, to suffer with us (Heb 4:15), as he did on this occasion. Our Lord saw this poor woman in a state of extreme grief. He made no effort to inspire her with joy but rather wanted her sorrow to become a source of life. So the hidden working of grace was to be in harmony with the feelings of pain Mary experienced. Jesus took her in the state she was and made of her grief an occasion of grace, of growth in holiness.

One might ask why our divine Lord was prepared to weep visibly; could he not work in Mary's heart as he did, without



doing that? During our Lord's life on earth, human 'personality' reflected the hidden workings of his heart. His giving of grace was mirrored in the human life of the Son of God. In all his actions the interior graces given corresponded with outward gestures. The human nature of the Son of God always was and will be the sole channel of the grace that comes from the divinity. Since his existence on earth was lived in a body, and all his contacts with human beings were mediated through his body, it follows that when a grace was to be communicated to anyone, it came about through the medium of his body.

Therefore, when his divine Majesty deigned to shed tears over Mary, that good lady obtained great gifts of holiness through her sorrow. The ministers of the Son of God can draw great profit from their Master's example in leading afflicted people to holiness. We must not try to cheer them up by a breezy approach but rather weep with those who weep, as St Paul says. But we must weep with devotion, so that our tears will sanctify theirs, so that we may pour grace into their souls even as we share their suffering. That was how our gentle Saviour disclosed the interest he had in this good person, the love he bore her. The result was that she came to love her beloved Lord more profoundly than before.

The second reason for the Son of God's tears was the Jews. He wanted to show how much he loved the people who believed in him and followed him in love and how much he consoled and comforted them in their pain. Since he was on the point of performing this miracle and manifesting his power, the Jews should have been better disposed to believe in him and draw his tenderness towards them. Furthermore, these Jews were moved to tears at the sight of Mary's tears. On seeing Jesus mingle his tears with theirs and sharing their sorrow, they should have been more disposed to believe in him when they saw the miracle take place.

All of this shows goodness on Jesus' part. He wished to save the poor Jews. To do so, he had to communicate faith in himself by performing this great miracle; but in order that the miracle would truly generate faith, the will of these people had first to become

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better disposed. They were full of all sorts of faults and prejudices; this explains why the miracles brought them no nearer the Son of God nor gave them the perfect faith that existed in the hearts of Mary and Martha. To profit fully from Jesus' miracles and begin to have sentiments of faith, a person needs a prior disposition of the heart that leaves him or her attuned to the impulse of grace.

This is why the divine Saviour began weeping – partly in order to touch the hearts of the Jews. Immediately afterwards he led them to the tomb in order to make an impression on them, to break down their reservations. This is another major lesson for his ministers. Let them learn that in order to bring back a lost sheep to the faith they must start by touching its heart. Even though faith is a virtue proper to the intellect, nevertheless it is grounded in an attitude of heart without which there is no virtue and definitely no faith.

The third reason for the Son of God's tears was that he wished to teach us that we must ponder our sorrows and know how to handle them. Sorrow in itself is not bad and the tears one sheds in these circumstances are in no way blameworthy. The Lord makes this clear by weeping at the sight of Mary and the Jews in tears. He lets them know he even approves of tears provided they are accompanied by certain attitudes. They must be inspired and controlled by grace, as were the tears of Mary, Martha's sister, according to the explanation offered above, when one throws oneself in deep love at the Master's feet as Mary had done.

It is in the nature of things that the death of a near relative will cause sorrow. This is a punishment for sin, not only for those who die but also for the living, and that in two ways. The first consists in the natural horror of death which makes us apprehensive; the second in the sorrow death causes when it strikes those with whom God has united us. This sorrow is either natural or supernatural and in either case death, which separates, can cause pain. St Paul furnishes us with an example of supernatural (sorrow). Speaking of one of his co-workers whom he loved dearly in the charity of his Master and who had just got over a dangerous

sickness, he announces his cure to the faithful and says God had chosen to take pity on him and not leave him overburdened with sorrow.

Of sorrow arising from the break-up of a natural union we see many examples in the Old Testament, as well as the one we witness here. The Saviour approves and sanctions this by his example and by the divine grace he infuses into the situation. We must be clear that this sorrow is not harmful, nor are these tears. (The sorrow) must be considered in itself and in its source. Whether its source be a natural or a supernatural affection, such sorrow is good. The sorrow arises in this way. We are attached to somebody either by natural or supernatural ties. If the ties are supernatural, the affection is meritorious and pleasing to God. If the emotion is natural – that is, if it comes from the author of nature, the Creator, and is imprinted by himself in the soul – it is still good, even though of itself without merit for heaven unless given a supernatural orientation. Not only is it good, but it is necessary and obligatory as of natural right.

Both emotions, then, are good provided they remain within the limits willed by the author of grace and nature. These emotions existing in the soul produce certain results in the senses, for the senses relish and enjoy them. Nor is this impression they make in the senses bad, since it is of the human being's nature, not the human being corrupt and spoilt by sin but the human being as it came from the hand of God. When it happens that God suddenly removes the person to whom he had allowed us to grow close, the senses undergo a shock proportionate to the strength of the emotion of love our hearts had experienced. The soul itself is shocked. The shock to the spirit and the senses produces sadness, pain and tears. Now it must be clearly recognized that this shock comes from an outside source. The ensuing pain is thus a feeling that one does not stir up in oneself but comes from elsewhere; so there is nothing harmful about it, no more than there is when one suffers bodily pain from being beaten with a stick. Pain and tears are indifferent things in themselves; they can be used for good or

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evil, depending on whether one yields to a sentiment of grace or of corrupt nature.

In this case, Mary, Martha's sister, sanctified her sorrow by yielding to the movement of grace. These brought her face to face with our Lord and gave her the attitude we saw above. In cases like that, tears and sorrow give rise to considerable spiritual good. (Pain) strengthens a soul's self-denial of all creatures, revivifies feelings of faith, leads one even further, and sometimes perfectly, into a holy abandonment to our Lord and his divine holy will. It deepens considerably our union with the divine Master. And yet it often happens that grace operates in certain souls in such a way that pain and tears do not arise; it furnishes more absorbing considerations that prevent the soul from being struck by the painful event that should have caused it sorrow.

The practical conclusion is that whenever we feel pain vividly we should have recourse to our Lord, as Magdalene did, and profit from the pain and tears according to God's point of view and the movement of interior grace. When we feel nothing, we must not create pain and tears but obey the divine grace given to us inwardly. We can judge that things have gone wrong if this suffering is empty of grace and turns us from God, if it troubles or greatly disturbs us. Although there is no sin or even imperfection in these sufferings, these reactions in our senses, it is worth remembering all the same that they stem from sin, like every kind of suffering. There are weaknesses common to all human beings, rooted in our nature since it was ravaged by sin.

This being so, the Son of God Incarnate could not give in to these negative feelings, nor did he wish to, except as he chose. For it would have been unsuitable for this most holy person to be subject despite himself to the ignominies of sin. Passion could never have sway over him except in so far as he allowed it. It was enough that he took on the littleness of sin, sharing the lot of beloved people, for whom he came to sacrifice himself. That is why it is written, 'he was troubled'. He produced this state by a formal act of his will. No outside power or event could touch his

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interior life or even his senses; permission from God is not enough: a formal act (of choice - ed.) was needed to achieve these results.

Note the words, 'he was deeply moved in spirit'. It must not be thought these words mean that he was overcome by grief as happens in other people who are pitifully weak as a result of being mastered by sin. The following words show that this was not so, for it is written, 'he was troubled'. He freely chose to weep and feel grief. Indeed the most natural explanation of these words would be, 'he groaned in the Holy Spirit'. All movements of this sacred human being were carried out under the inspiration and immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus our adorable Master, Jesus, on this occasion graciously took on one of our weaknesses by an inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of souls.

The reason the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is mentioned here (even though all the activity of the sacred humanity was carried out by the Holy Spirit) is that we are dealing with an action which, in other people, would be an effect of sin. The evangelist cannot allow this idea to enter anybody's head, so he shows that the action was freely willed instead of it being a spontaneous, passionate response, as in us. In Jesus it was a result of an immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whereas in us it is a result of sinfulness. 'He was troubled' does not mean the trouble was in our Lord's spirit. That inner spirit was never troubled, nor could it be. This disturbance took place in his senses; it usually ends in tears but does not necessarily affect one's inner spirit by producing similar disturbances there.

34. *Et dixit: Ubi posuistis eum?*  
*Dicunt ei: Domine, veni et vide.*

34. *and he said, "Where have you  
laid him?" They said to him,  
"Lord, come and see."*

Our Lord has now worked upon his own sensibility and shown his tenderness towards this devout family, thereby focusing the attention of both the two sisters and the Jews. He now says, 'Where have you laid him?' He knew well, but he wished to

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stimulate in them the desire and hope of the resurrection he was going to bring about. To ask where they had put the body, immediately after comforting his friends' sorrow, was almost tantamount to offering to raise it from the dead. His extraordinary power was well known; if their spirits were not so crushed the two sisters would have conceived high hopes. For why should he wish to visit the dead man's tomb? He should rather avoid it for, according to the law, one contracted a legal impurity by going there. Mary probably began to have hopes although saying nothing; she was certainly on tenterhooks between hope and fear. The Jews scarcely thought of a miracle; still, they said to come and see. Because of the unusual interest he took in the sisters' misfortune, they thought he was going to the tomb out of friendship for Lazarus and they accompanied him without a second thought. Besides, they could presume Mary and Martha would not allow him to go alone.

35. *Et lacrimatus est Jesus.*

35. *Jesus wept.*

Setting out on the way behind them Jesus wept, to show still more the great affection he had for this family. In the goodness of his heart, this was Jesus' way of preparing these people for the great miracle he was about to perform. As he approached the tomb he showed how much he cared for them by choosing to show his grief a second time (verse 38). This was intended to arouse faith and hope in the dead man's friends.

36. *Dicebant ergo Judaei: Ecce quomodo  
amabat eum.*

36. *So the Jews said, "See how he  
loved him!"*

The Jews saw only sterile friendship in our Lord's behaviour. It edified them, it is true, but they had no idea that he loved him so much that he would really raise the dead man to life again. They did not think in those terms. Yet their basic attitudes were good enough for the miracle to influence them, in accordance with (our Lord's) plans. As they thought (of Jesus' friendship with



Lazarus – ed.) their wills were well disposed always an essential precondition for a miracle to do good. All the prejudices of the Jews against our Lord turned them against him and prevented them from acknowledging the miracles he worked. Quite often those, who were least badly disposed, had their curiosity satisfied and their ethnic pride increased. But whenever Jesus' actions or divine words brought them to a quieter state of mind, they drew real faith from these miracles. On this occasion Jesus' divine goodness in this miracle worked in that way by producing a greater abundance of faith in those who possessed some faith already, and a beginning of faith in those who had none.

37. *Quidam autem ex ipsis dixerunt:  
Non poterat hic, qui aperuit oculos  
caeci nati, facere ut hic non  
moreretur?*

37. *But some of them said, "Could not  
he who opened the eyes of the  
blind man have kept this man from  
dying?"*

Some of the Jews were badly disposed towards the divine Saviour, they resisted the touch of his holy actions. Their hearts must have been very hardened and closed to remain so insensitive. The Son of God's actions produced all the effects of grace, however poor the dispositions it met with, and only with difficulty could his extraordinary actions be resisted. Now this action in question was one of these. The divine Saviour showed his love for souls and did so in the strongest way possible for a human being to show his love. He did it in order to give the fullness of love to those who witnessed his action. What power that divine operation must have had on souls!

When we see a man cry few people hold aloof, such is our sympathy with the feelings of tenderness nature demonstrates. But when the Son of God cried, what effects this tenderness must have produced? Nevertheless, those people instead of being touched showed their dissatisfaction with him and said in their harshness of heart, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' They believed because the man born blind forced them to, but they did not have a real,

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personal faith. They believed in spite of themselves. Their malice prevented them from having real, personal faith but could not remove the memory of how Jesus had cured the blind man, whom they knew. Therefore, they misused maliciously all the graces divine goodness offered them on that occasion. They remembered the earlier miracles, not in order to say, 'Oh, his love for Lazarus will surely make him raise him'. They preferred to indulge their malice against the divine Lamb. It galled them. They saw him being tender and affectionate towards Lazarus and his sisters. Instead of being touched and softened themselves they became disgruntled and murmured, 'Why did he let him die?'

We will see shortly that Lazarus' resurrection made no deeper impression on them. Once a soul is hardened in malice it converts into poison the greatest graces imparted by Jesus' divine love. O Jesus, my life and my love, you are extremely kind to me. I have often been more wicked than these Jews, and yet you touched my heart in your great goodness; you prevented me from turning the benefits of your goodness to my own loss. O divine Lamb, do put up with me, full of malice as I still am at present. Never let me murmur but rather fill me with love for everything you wish to do, so that I may love, adore and desire you alone more and more, O my divine love!

38. *Jesus ergo rursus fremens in semetipso, venit ad monumentum: erat autem spelunca; et lapis superpositus erat ei.*

38. *Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.*

Just as he reached the tomb Jesus once again sighed deeply. At this moment the Jews were watching what he was going to do. Jesus acted in this tender fashion in order to prepare them for the miracle. The evangelist adds that the tomb was a cave, at the entry to which lay a stone. He seems to mention this in view of the explanation (of the resurrection – ed.) that will come later. Good people will be favourably impressed by all of this for the Holy Spirit inspires nothing in vain. As Lazarus' resurrection is an image of the sinner's resurrection, all the circumstances noted in

the gospel represent things that have something to do with the sinner's state of heart.

39. *Ait Jesus: Tollite lapidem. Dicit ei Martha, soror ejus qui mortuus fuerat: Domine, jam faetet; quatruiduanus est enim.*

39. *Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead four days."*

Having readied the hearts of the bystanders for the miracle he was going to work, Jesus wished to test their spirit and strengthen their faith through his actions. He did not need to get the stone removed, he could have made it move at the same time as he raised Lazarus, or he could have raised Lazarus first. But he wished to animate the faith of those around. Having done that, their wills being well disposed and their minds alert in faith, the miracle would produce much fruit. These words were addressed especially to the Jews present; they probably set to work as soon as the Lord spoke.

Meanwhile Mary said nothing. No doubt her heart underwent the strongest movements of love while all this was going on. It was chiefly for love of her that the Son of God graciously shed tears; one would expect her to reply instead of Martha. But no! She was in contemplative silence. Whether she expected to see a miracle or did not even think of it, since her heart was absorbed in love for her Lord and in all the goodness he showed, she was silent, absorbed in a quiet filled with divine love. She certainly refrained from contradicting her beloved Master, as her mind could not think otherwise than as her divine Master thought and her will lovingly obeyed all her Master's desires and wishes. Mary's faith was full.

Martha, on the other hand, did not have perfect faith. She believed her Master could raise Lazarus and if he had said he was going to do so, she would have believed. But from that position to one of perfect faith is a long journey. Martha had faith and love, but neither of them perfectly. Perfect faith demands union with



eternal Wisdom and complete surrender of the intelligence, and perfect love demands union and perfect surrender of the will. As love can never refuse the least desires of him who is its divine object, so faith has no retort to his words.

As long as people bring their own minds into their contacts with the Saviour they will be liable to go wrong in many different ways because our minds and wills set restrictions to what we will do for God. If, on the contrary, our faith and love are strong, we respond to every word our beloved speaks to us.

Martha's inappropriate action – offering all sorts of resistance to our divine Master – is still repeated by many people who want to give themselves to his divine love. One can always make all sorts of observations and raise many questions concerning the interior inspirations by which our good Master speaks to us. Very few souls know, as Mary did, how to keep silent in complete surrender, with intense faith and love before the Lord and Master of our lives. Few people allow themselves to pay attention to Jesus' most tentative overtures.

What is at the root of this? The same fault as Martha's. Martha still acted spontaneously; this meant that her mind was not fully in tune with her Master's divine mind. She could take her own initiatives at any moment, even when her heart was filled with loving delight. When this happens she would find herself at odds with her divine Master. At the very least she would find herself reasoning, examining, modifying the divine message. When this happened, the will is rigid and resists commands. Martha failed because her mind resisted and her will opposed the divine word.

The Saviour had given her to understand in a quite formal manner that he was going to raise Lazarus. If her mind had been disposed to surrender to her Master, she would have understood from the first moment. Even if she had only half understood, her mind would have paid peaceful attention (to the Lord), enlivened by hope in the Lord's goodness. But her mind, accustomed to deciding for itself, tended to resist (the Lord's inspirations – ed.). This prevented her from understanding clearly that it was a

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matter of raising her brother from the dead even after all she had seen in her divine Master. Her faith was not strong enough to take even a strong hint.

Martha's will put up opposition as well, inasmuch as she wanted to stop the tomb from being opened at the very moment the Saviour gave the command. True, it was out of her goodness that she opposed removing the stone: 'there will be an odour'. All the same, a will truly surrendered to God gives in to the first sign of the divine will and never quibbles. The same thing happens to all who are still bent on making their own decisions (i.e. without reference to God). With the best will in the world they fall into a multitude of faults, and quite often that same good will is even the cause of their faults, because it makes them in a merely natural way. Ordinarily the good Master will have compassion on them and lead them back with great gentleness, patience and long-suffering, as he did with St Martha.

40. *Dicit ei Jesus: Nonne dixi tibi,  
quoniam, si credideris, videbis  
gloriam Dei?*

40. *Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell  
you that if you would believe  
you would see the glory of God?"*

Jesus reproved St Martha with great goodness, simply reminding her of what he had said earlier (in verses 23, 25, 26). That should have been enough to give her more confidence in her Master and enable her to surrender completely to him, as has been explained in the preceding verse. This is how Jesus takes his friends to task. Martha loved and believed in him; it was simply that her faith and love were not perfect. Jesus, in his goodness towards her, had regard for her weakness. This is his usual way of dealing with those who belong to him. When they are unfaithful to his divine grace and silent words, he is good enough to speak to them in their hearts, reminding them of these things, giving them to understand that they should have been more faithful. This inspires them to repent of their fault and allows them to be led back to fidelity.

A believer unfaithful to his God in a passing way like that must not become discouraged or think the divine Master will abandon him, even if his falls are frequent and regular. Oh no! It must certainly not think that. As long as he possesses his Master's love, he will be given life thereby; our Lord will bring him back gently. Our Lord told Martha that if she believed, she would see the glory of God through the resurrection of Lazarus. What misfortune for us to be unfaithful to our God! Great harm can often result from a small infidelity.

Martha, because of a minor lack of attention to our Lord, seemed intent on depriving him of the glory that would accrue to him should he raise Lazarus from the dead. She was depriving herself too of growth in faith and love. She was depriving the Jewish bystanders of a great leap forward in faith should her brother be raised from the dead. These final words of Jesus were fully effective. Unlike other occasions Martha did not reply. She kept silent, touched inwardly by grace, as a consequence of her Master's words. She waited, and the miracle took place.

41. *Tulerunt ergo lapidem; Jesus autem, elevatis sursum oculis dixit: Pater, gratias ago tibi quoniam audisti me.*

41. *So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

Quite possibly the Jews paused when they heard Martha's observation and only when she lapsed into silence after the Saviour's word did they set about removing the stone again. The word 'so' could also refer to our Lord's words, 'take away the stone'. Once the stone was removed our divine Saviour lifted his eyes to heaven.

Quite often in the Gospel we are told that Jesus raised his eyes to heaven. This happens when in his humanity he wishes to honour the Father. Jesus made this gesture for three reasons. In this way he could take part in praising his Father and express what his heart was doing at that moment. He could show the people how great was his love (for the Father) and leave a lasting



impression on their minds. The gesture he made revealed his inner attitude and state of prayer. It was, finally made to gain merit and grace for the actions we perform when we express in bodily fashion the sentiments he places in our souls, visibly honouring his heavenly Father.

All Jesus' actions on earth were done for us, according to what he says elsewhere, 'and for their sake I consecrate myself' (Jn 17:19). These bodily gestures of his were always in harmony and relationship with his inner attitude of heart. Thus on the Mount of Olives he fell prostrate to the ground. Here, when it was a matter of raising his heart to his heavenly Father to give him loving thanks, he raised his eyes.

Our Lord, then, raised his eyes and gave thanks to his Father for having been heard. To be heard he had to pray. How does the Son of God pray? Did he not himself bring about this resurrection (of Lazarus) as much as his Father, since he is equal to him in power, and does he not share as much as the Father himself in all that he does for creatures? It must be observed that we speak of the Incarnate Word, who obtains for us all the goods and gifts of nature and grace through his infinite merits which he offers unceasingly for his unfortunate and sinful fellow human beings. These merits accompany the Son's prayers offered to the Father. That did not prevent the Son gain merit for us with the Father from performing this miracle by his own power: 'come out'. His Father gave him (as man) these works of power to do, as in his wonderful mercy he told us earlier. But, although the miracle was his own doing, nevertheless he had obtained the power to carry it out through his own merits (as man) presented before his Father's throne.

Jesus said, 'Thou hast heard me', in the past tense. There are three possible explanations. First, according to the usage of the Hebrews the past is used for the present; and in this case it meant that the moment when he acts upon us through grace is the moment he presents his merits before his Father to obtain this benefit for us. Thus at the moment of raising Lazarus he applied

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his infinite merits to him to win for him miraculous life; his prayer to his Father at that moment included applying his merits (on Lazarus' behalf – ed.).

In the second place the following could be said. The divine Master aroused this emotion in himself, he shed tears at the sight of the tears of Mary and the Jews, he stirred up the faith of the Jews and then Martha's, in their hearts he made them conceive desires for Lazarus' resurrection and he joined their prayers to the offering he made to his Father. He prayed and was heard because of his own prayer and because of the prayer he had aroused in them. Their prayers were linked with his. Any prayer that is not Jesus' prayer is not heard.

And the prayer made in us by Jesus is always heard, as he says in the next verse, 'thou hearest me always'. The prayers he makes in us are always heard inasmuch as he makes them in us. What is not heard in our prayers is what comes from our own resources. This is nearly always corrupt and can never produce a supernatural effect.

The third way of explaining the statement, 'thou hast heard me', is this. Our Lord speaks to his Father about eternal predestination, by which the Father from all eternity sees his Son applying his merits in the course of time to the dead Lazarus and offering them to him in order to obtain power to raise him from the dead. The Father had decreed from before the origin of things that his beloved Son would do this favour for Lazarus and his sisters and the Jews. The Father in his eternal decrees predestines the graces to be given to creatures living in this world only in view of his Son's merits. Thus he hears his prayer from all eternity.

The evangelist says, 'he lifted up his eyes', but not, 'to heaven'. It gives the impression that our Lord was already inside the cave when he made this prayer and though he could not see the sky any more, he lifted his eyes towards heaven. But the words might also bear a mystical explanation. Our Lord living in his members takes part in their suffering and in the various states the divine will may reduce them to as a just punishment for their sins.

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Lazarus was dead and buried in the tomb. The Saviour underwent that affliction in the person of Lazarus. Furthermore, Lazarus' condition was an image of the ruin that all creatures deserve who are lost in sin.

Jesus comes to raise them by reducing himself to nothing for them and with them. He dies and is buried with Lazarus and in the person of Lazarus. This explains why his heart is touched, he sighs, weeps with compassion over the plight of these creatures of his heavenly Father. Then from the bottom of the tomb (in which he is buried as it were with Lazarus) he raises his eyes towards his Father to thank him for having heard his prayer for the salvation of these poor creatures. 'He lifted up his eyes', is said in contrast to the depth of the tomb in which he was buried under the ruins of sin. He lifted up his eyes in the same spirit in which the psalmist said, 'Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord'. These words were said about our Lord, and he fulfilled them here.

One point remains to be explained. Our Lord gave thanks that his Father had heard him. It is not noted that he had said a prayer, and it would seem strange that this was his prayer. If the phrase, 'thou hast heard me', is understood in the last sense we spoke of, the difficulty vanishes. In the first sense, one could say that all our Lord's intentions, in his actions and in all the graces he wished to grant, were prayers, because his intentions were to apply his merit on behalf of sinners. He offered these to his Father to secure the grace he wished to grant or the action he wished to do. Thus, the Son of God, by moving towards Lazarus' tomb with the intention of raising him, implicitly prayed because by that very fact he offered his merits (to the Father) in order to obtain the grace of resurrection (for Lazarus). So he simply gave thanks when it came to the moment of working the miracle. He pronounced his Father's holy name and addressed his thanks to him, so as to make clear in whose name he was going to act and whose power was involved in the action.



42. *Ego autem sciebam quia semper me audis, sed propter populum qui circumstat dixi, ut credat quia tu me misisti.*

42. *I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me."*

The Son of God's whole life on earth was a prayer, an adoration, a thanksgiving and an offering to wipe away sins. His divine life passed on earth constituted one and the same sacrifice. The sacrifice was first made at the Incarnation: the Word emptied himself; the act of sacrifice consisted in this emptying. Ever since that time the whole divine life was an emptying of himself until the sacrifice was consumed on Calvary, where he said, 'it is finished', that is to say, the sacrifice was finished, complete. This meant that the long sacrifice of his whole life had its consummation in his adorable death. The sacrifice began by the emptying of the Word, the Son of God, and finished by the destruction of the human being, the Son of man. The space of time between these two special moments was occupied by one and the same sacrifice.

During the interval between these two great moments some noteworthy circumstances arose in which the Son of God would reiterate his sacrifice in an external way by going through certain ritual actions. These circumstances required serious reasons for his doing so. In this way the words of the prophet were fulfilled to the letter: 'When he came into the world he said, sacrifices and burnt offerings thou hast not desired... Then I said, lo I have come' (Heb 10:5-7). There an act of sacrifice was carried out, but it was on entering the world, for it was a question of embracing a new kind of sacrifice. The first kind was the 'emptying' of the Word made flesh in Mary's virginal womb.

The second took place when he entered this impure world on issuing from Mary's womb. That was the moment he made the act of sacrifice noted by the prophet: 'then I said...' The Son of man was to take the place of physical victims; reality was to replace the image. He accomplished this act of sacrifice in order to bring

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about such a change for the better. The sacrifice remained the same, he did not change it; it was simply that on entering into a new world order he made an offering of himself so as to obtain new graces for this new world order. Before beginning to preach he went to fast in the desert. This action betokened his sacrifice, for he was entering a new period of his life: his public life. He made the offering of his sacrifice to obtain graces for this ministry. Finally (came) his cross, which was to be the consummation of everything.

But all these sacrifices amounted to one single sacrifice. Because of the particular importance of these great stages in his life on earth, the Son of man continued to make this act of sacrifice. During all the other periods of his life this was, and had to be, one and the same act, unceasingly repeated. As regards the Word – his divine will does not make a decision distinct from its action. Thus when at the origin of the world he expressed the Father's will, this statement of the Father's will was the very action that created all being. 'Let there be light': this is an express act of the divine will. 'And there was light'. How did it come about? By this one clearly stated decree of the divine will. And so, when the Word wanted in the course of time to make and offer sacrifices as a human being, it came about in this way. The Father chose to move his Son's human will in such a way as to want to make this sacrifice and to carry it out.

As for his human will, the same thing holds: his acts of virtue were uninterrupted. All the virtues he possessed were sustained throughout his life from the moment of his conception until his death. Certain acts of virtue are excepted, whose time to be performed was determined from all eternity by the divine will; then at the appointed time each act was produced according to all the perfection and holiness which the divine will had decreed from all eternity. Even in these cases Jesus' enlightened spirit knew of this act from the first moment of his existence and his human will gave itself to it with a love no creature could fathom.

To prove this active union between Jesus' divine and human

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wills one has only to recall that his sacred humanity was hypostatically united to the divine Word. (i.e. two natures united in one divine person – ed.) Jesus' human will and its decisions were also united through the hypostatic union to the Word's divine will and its decisions. All these decisions originated in the divine person, the Word of God. Consequently, the activity of Jesus' human will was always obedient to the desires of the divine Word. Besides, in his human nature Jesus enjoyed the vision of God and continually received enlightenment from the Word concerning the divine plan. He saw all the Father's plans for him and for what he should do.

Thus, his holy human will never ceased to be fully obedient to the divine will and its activity was never split in any way. His human will was never distracted in its attention nor weakened in its resolve, nor did its decisions ever waver. Furthermore, these decisions never increased or diminished in intensity, never became more perfect, never less.

This means that all activity was coordinated in the sacred humanity of Jesus, from the beginning of his life until the end. In weak wretched human beings, such as we are on earth, this perfect life of our Lord is not possible. Our attention is always flagging and our will deviates from God. Even if we focus our attention, our will in its weakness and corruption turns away from God; rarely does it even persevere long in an act of choice of God, even when it does not turn away to created things. That is why we ought to renew every so often the good intentions and the virtuous choices we have been enabled to make by the good God.

But let us come back to our passage. Since these things are so, how is it that the Son of God makes an exception here to his usual course of action? Why does he pray so explicitly? In this verse he explains himself. He had plans of extraordinary mercy for this people; he wished to lead them back to his heavenly Father; he was going to work a miracle, and by that miracle all the people were to believe in him except some whose hearts were hardened. Since he did not seek his own glory but his Father's, he wanted to



get them to see clearly that the Father had sent him, that he did these works only by his Father's power within him.

'I know that thou hearest me always'. By this he was saying he had no need to make a distinct, express act of offering of his merits to obtain both Lazarus' resurrection, and the resurrection of the human race, which it signified. His offering of himself was a continuous process and was continually being heard: 'always', that is to say, uninterruptedly. Jesus adds that he addressed these words to his Father for the sake of the bystanders; that is, he made known what was happening in his heart as he worked on their behalf. He offered his merits to obtain Lazarus' resurrection and gave thanks unceasingly to his Father for hearing him. So there was nothing unusual in the present circumstance except that he expressed aloud the thanks he gave to his Father. It could also be that he spoke thus because these people, on hearing him giving thanks for having been heard, might think he was not always heard. So he gave thanks this time as people do when they give thanks for something extraordinary.

Another mistaken idea could have been given by this act of thanksgiving. One only gives thanks for a benefit that is accorded freely and by choice but not for something due in strict justice. Our Lord did not give thanks for himself, since all his merits received their reward in strict justice. He declares as much in the words, 'thou hearest me always'. But he gave thanks that his merits were applied in favour of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead and the conversion of the people present. This was pure mercy: 'that thou hast heard me'. That is the point here.

It remains to look at why our Lord addressed himself to his Father and not to the people themselves. He could well have said to the people all that he goes on to say to his Father in this verse; it would seem more natural, for he was instructing these people and spoke the words only on their behalf. The reason is this. By addressing his Father he continued his prayer and presented his merits to him so that the people present would have faith in him as one sent from the Father. But it would be ridiculous to think he

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was apologising to his Father for addressing to him the prayer contained in the previous verse. But why did he say those words (almost of apology) aloud, and by choice? These words were intended to encourage the bystanders to believe that he had come from the Father. He still said these words aloud to show the gathering the great love he bore them and the immense desire he had for their salvation. By means of this his love touched their very hearts. The words of verse 41 brought the grace of light into the people's understanding and those of verse 42 the grace of love into their will. The result was a living intense faith.

43. *Haec cum dixisset, voce magna clamavit: Lazare, veni foras!*

43. *When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."*

Our Lord Jesus Christ's miracles were accomplished through the sacred humanity in which the divinity dwelt. Divine power was communicated to the sacred humanity and energy went out from it to work these wonders. It was right that these extraordinary deeds should have been accomplished through his human nature since it was in his human nature he merited the graces for this prodigious activity. He did not work miracles by his human power alone but by the divine power granted to him. Our Lord normally offered these wonders he accomplished as proof of his mission; in one place he even says it was his Father who did the works. Having divine power at his disposal, he used it according to his Father's will to do these extraordinary works.

Although divine power was involved, nevertheless human energy was also transferred. This explains why, every time our Lord worked a miracle, he did it through a deliberate action of his human body – by word or deed. All of his humanity was involved in the transaction. That is also why people tried to touch him, for energy was given out by his sacred humanity. In order to teach this truth, he said on one occasion when someone had touched him: 'Someone has touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me' (Lk 8:46).

This explains the divine Master's approach here. He began by praying to his Father (as the previous verse said) to elicit his Father's powerful will for the miraculous deed of raising Lazarus. He prayed in a loud voice, to show the people that it was not his own human strength but the divine power that was going to be released. Then he said, as if from the depths of his heart, 'Lazarus, come out'. He showed that he held divine power in his hands but his humanity was to put this power to use.

From his human body came forth the divine force to raise Lazarus. He cried out in a loud voice so that the sound of his voice would reach Lazarus and his human body could act directly on the subject of the miracle in the usual way. He could have said these same words in an ordinary tone of voice and then worked the same wonder, as he sometimes did, for example, when he said to the prince, 'your son will live' (Jn 4:50). But then he would have raised the dead man by an act of his will rather than by the action of his human body. By doing it this way he wished to show the people the power at work in his sacred humanity.

But why did our Lord not go right into the cave, into the presence of the dead man? There are several possible reasons. Firstly, it was not becoming his dignity to enter a dark place. Secondly, it was a place considered unclean in the eyes of the Jews. He would have had to purify himself, and this was unworthy of his holiness; his holiness could never be stained, or else he would have had to appear in the eyes of the Jews as someone who despised their law. This would have caused great scandal. Thirdly, it was to spare the Jews, out of his goodness for them. They had such great horror of tombs that certainly many of them would have lacked the courage to follow him.

Fourthly, he wished to give an image of the general resurrection of the dead. Now on the day of the great resurrection the Son of God will make his voice heard by all the dead to raise them. He will go to visit them in their graves, he will call them and they will rise at his voice. Fifthly and lastly, the resurrection of Lazarus was an image of the conversion of the sinner. Now the Son of God does

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not enter the sinner's soul to convert it and lead it back to life, but he calls to it from outside. 'I stand at the door and knock' (Rev.3:20) 'Come out'. Sinners must not remain in the tomb, in their bad habits. They must leave the ways of the flesh, which are the tomb of the soul; the soul dead in sin is buried in the flesh. If Lazarus' resurrection is interpreted as an image of the state of death in which sometimes good people and friends of Jesus find themselves, the words, 'come out', indicate this return to the light.

Our Lord calls back these souls from the tomb of darkness, where their understanding lies buried. Next, he undoes the bonds that hold their wills chained inextricably, thus re-establishing the soul in perfect freedom. After the example of Lazarus, he leads the soul from a natural life into death and the night of the tomb, through the powerlessness in which he places it, and then he leads it into a supernatural state through the gift of resurrection.

44. *Et statim prodiit qui fuerat  
mortuus, ligatus pedes et manus  
institis et facies illius sudario erat  
ligata. Dixit eis Jesus: Solvite eum,  
et sinite abire.*

44. *The dead man came out, his hands  
and feet bound with bandages,  
and his face wrapped with a cloth.  
Jesus said to them, "Unbind him,  
and let him go."*

Jesus did not tell Lazarus' soul to function in his body as before, for he did not order him to rise as he did the daughter of Jairus, *tabitha cumi*. But he ordered him to come out of his tomb and thus demonstrated the great power he possessed. Nature obeys him even when he commands indirectly. He told Lazarus to come out and Lazarus returned to life and came out at once. 'The dead man came out'. It is not by accident that the evangelist spoke in this manner. The bonds that tied Lazarus have a meaning. In the explanation given above of Lazarus' death, applied to the darkness of a soul in its state of trial, the bonds on the feet indicate helplessness to direct one's own movements. The soul so encumbered cannot continue the route that leads towards God, it lacks the capacity to follow its way. The bonds on his hands indicate the incapacity to perform acts of the will. And the

winding-sheet on the face indicates the darkness of the understanding. Jesus says to undo all these bonds; the soul goes free, leaving that pitiful condition behind it, as it goes on towards its God. Meaning is given to Lazarus' death by relating it to the death of sin; the bonds on the feet show our inability to work for God alone. The sinful soul is off the track, it is in bondage, as far as reaching God is concerned. The bonds on the hands point to the good works it cannot perform. Finally, the winding sheet stands for the darkness of the mind when it receives no light from God.

### The Jewish Leaders Decide

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| 45. <i>Multi ergo ex Judaeis, qui venerant ad Mariam et Martham, et viderunt quae fecit Jesus, crediderunt in eum.</i> | 45. <i>Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him;</i> |
| 46. <i>Quidam autem ex ipsis abierunt ad Phariseos, et dixerunt eis quae fecit Jesus.</i>                              | 46. <i>but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.</i>                     |

The Jews who were well disposed could hardly fail to believe such a miracle. They knew Lazarus had died and been buried; of that they were certain. Now they saw him coming back to life after four days of death and they believed. Nevertheless, three important points emerge from this. The first is that without a powerful grace of conversion the most miraculous facts make no impact. It is not miracles that give the faith. They dispose human reason for the faith, which is given by an interior grace; and this grace touches the heart on the occasion of a miracle. Grace turns the mind in a certain direction and moves the heart by what it sees. It inspires faith.

People think they believe because of what they have seen. Their faith is founded on what they saw in this sense – that what they had seen was used as an instrument in God's hands to touch and enlighten them; but what they had seen was not the immediate

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source of their enlightenment, that was an inner grace. The same holds for all the motives of faith offered to reason. In this case the divine Saviour's words and actions had already had great effect, producing and drawing down grace into those hearts to prepare them to be taken by surprise. In the second place it is people's bad dispositions that causes them to be lost and prevents them from acquiring faith. The greatest graces are worthless to them. The Saviour, so full of goodness and mercy for the poor Jews, went to such great pains to draw them along and dispose them for this outstanding miracle in order to present them with the gift of faith. Yet they became all the more hardened!

And this is the third noteworthy fact. In some cases extraordinary grace is granted, accompanied by a strong interior invitation. It certainly happened on this occasion when the divine Saviour spoke and acted with great feeling. When that happens and people reject this great grace, they fall into malice and sometimes into hardness of heart. It seems that this happened to the Jews mentioned in verse 46. They went off to recount what they had seen, apparently in a malevolent and bitter spirit. Knowing that the Pharisees were jealous of the wonders the Son of God was doing and jealous of the universal esteem and love he was acquiring among the people, they went to stir up these evil sentiments among others. They described all the different actions the Lord had taken: 'what Jesus had done'. This is normal for people like that; they go back over all the actions, making malicious comments on each detail of their story, representing everything in a way that will embitter all those with whom they speak and increase their hostility.

47. *Collegerunt ergo Pontifices et  
Pharisaei concilium et dicebant:  
Quid facimus, quia hic multa signa  
facit?*

47. *So the chief priests and the  
Pharisees gathered the council,  
and said, "What are we to do?  
For this man performs signs.*



48. *Si dimittimus eum sic, omnes  
credent in eum: et venient Romani  
et tollent nostrum locum et gentem.*

48. *If we let him go on thus,  
everyone will believe in him, and  
the Romans will come and  
destroy both our holy place and  
our nation".*

The Pharisees, full of hatred and envy against our Lord, as appears in all circumstances, gathered a council to put an end to the numberless miracles the divine Messiah kept on working. These miracles, coupled with his holy doctrine, were destroying the reputation of the priests and Pharisees: the doctrine – because it condemned them; and the (miracles), – since they established the authority of him who taught the doctrine. The miracles had two adverse effects on them: they placed our Lord infinitely above them and they guaranteed the doctrine that showed up their evil behaviour so well. What are we doing, they said, we are letting this man go on doing many miracles? The reasons they gave for stopping him were, firstly, that the people would believe in him and secondly, that the Romans would come, make war and destroy everything because they did not want the Jewish people to have a king.

We see in this speech people who both wish to deceive themselves and to delude themselves with specious reasoning. The Pharisees believed in Moses and the prophets; they expected the Messiah precisely at the time our Lord appeared on earth; now they see a man working innumerable great miracles, such miracles as seem certain to make all the people believe in him, that is to say, to make all the people recognize him as the Messiah and follow him. For this reason they think they must prevent him from doing these marvels, for fear that the Romans, having learnt the Messiah king had come, would make war on the Jewish people.

But what had they to fear from the Romans, with their Messiah at their head? Would they have preferred to remain under the servitude of the Romans and reject their Messiah because of the Romans? It was already a declaration of guilt; certainly none of these hypocrites would ever have dared to say they felt this way while their envy and hatred of our Lord blinded them.

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What is more, by these words they gave formal homage to our good Master. The sole reason they adduced for opposing this wonderful man was fear of the Romans, which means they found the miracles genuine, coming from God. For if they had believed them false they should have hunted down the one who did them, not out of fear of the Romans but because he was seducing the people. Consequently they could have reasoned thus: either you believe this man is sent from God and working true miracles in the name of God – or not. If the latter, then you should oppose an evildoer not because of the Romans but because he is evil. You would not have to look for far-fetched reasons and Caiaphas would not have to say that one man must die for the people; he would die of his own accord. In the former case the question could have been put to them: will you formally resist God and his Messiah to avoid displeasing the Romans? In fact you are rejecting the only remaining remedy for your ills, and so you will be delivered over to those same Romans whom you fear.

But had the Pharisees not been so full of malice they would not have reasoned so badly. They recognized divine power and tried to prevent the people from believing in it. Envy alone was capable of bringing about this lamentable blindness in these proud people. They felt ashamed in each other's company and tried to colour their malice by an appearance of good. Nonetheless, their words betrayed them, as nearly always happens. All these fine pretexts could not hide the hatred they had for the Lord and only gave rise to more evil dispositions. And, as often happens, they said things that made clearer the meaning of our Lord's divinity and mission.

Nothing is more dangerous in a soul than pride. It does not seek the truth and will not rally to it except when the truth is in its favour. When the truth is opposed to its pretensions, pride resorts to all sorts of tricks to escape it. Nearly always it tries to blind the mind; the mind sees only according to what flatters it, it closes off all openings to the truth and opens itself to what can deceive it. These illusions usually are created under the pretext of doing good.

49. *Unus autem ex ipsis Caiaphas nomine cum esset Pontifex anni illius, dixit eis: Vos nescitis quidquam.*

49. *But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all;*

50. *Nec cogitatis quia expedit vobis ut unus moriatur homo pro populo, et non tota gens pereat.*

50. *you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."*

The Pharisees and priests seemed embarrassed over what they had to do. They had probably the same thought as Caiaphas, that it was necessary that this wonderful man be done to death, but they did not dare to reveal it. These men seemed to be on guard against one another, they felt they were doing wrong, and their pride made them afraid to say such a harmful thing. That is why they were so reserved.

It was up to their leader to open this council, which was appropriate for the leader of such an assembly. What proves that this was the feeling of all the Pharisees is that no one objected, and from that time on they hid no more. They openly pursued the divine Messiah and told the people he was a seducer. The mask having fallen from the face of all these proud people, they had no more shame or fear before each other. They just had to make their effort more plausible to the people, who were more sincerely attached to their Messiah than these proud ones. They told the people he was a seducer.

Caiaphas knew what was going on in the minds of the members of his council and he had no fear of declaring his mind. Moreover, Caiaphas had probably reached greater depths of evil than they had. This is shown by the fact that he saw they were afraid to declare their intentions. He began his admonition by saying hard things to them. But while saying hard words he knew how to avoid the main issue, as they did, so as not to allow room for the basic question as to whether Jesus was the Messiah. Therefore Caiaphas does not deny what the others had presupposed, that

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the miracles were many and genuine. He makes no statement about the personage there was question of condemning to death. He is happy to agree with the Pharisees. The Romans will come to take away the people and destroy the Temple. The simplest way to prevent these evils is to put to death him who caused this evil to happen. In truth he is innocent, but Caiaphas passes over that, that is not the question; he must die for the people.

This twist he gives to his opinion is of refined malice. He spares his accomplices the shame of a crime and colours his sentiments with political virtue, concern for the public good. Seeing how minds were disposed, he could not have given his opinion more adroitly in order to arrive at the criminal goal he desired. He leaves on his companions' eyes the veil they had placed there and wished to keep there. You know nothing, he says, you see the evil and you do not know how to apply a remedy. The Pharisees were content with this reproach; it covered their vanity. They gave the impression of only attending the council presided over by their violent leader, the evil involved was not their responsibility (according to the false reckoning they had made for themselves).

Caiaphas said, 'It is expedient for you'. The Pharisees feared for the country and the people. Caiaphas knew well that it was not the interests of the people he was working for. He spoke in order to get them to become more favourable to his ideas by showing them it was in their interest to do so. He catches them on a sensitive spot. He makes them think by his words that the kind of indignation he has given vent to comes from his interest in their welfare and in order to uphold their authority. 'That one man' and so on. It is to your advantage that one man should die for the people, just one man, but which man? – an enemy of the Pharisees, a detractor of their authority. He does not utter the key word, but he knew his colleagues would understand; it was better to let it be thought than to say it. 'And that the whole nation should not perish'. If the whole people perished, what would remain for you then?

51. *Hoc autem a semetipso non dixit:  
sed cum esset pontifex anni illius,  
prophetavit quod Jesus moriturus  
erat pro gente.*

51. *He did not say this of his own  
accord, but being high priest  
that year he prophesied that  
Jesus would die for the nation,*

52. *Et non tantum pro gente, sed ut  
filios Dei, qui erant dispersi,  
congregaret in unum.*

52. *and not for the nation only, but to  
gather into one the children of God  
who are scattered abroad.*

The turn of phrase this evil man uses is entirely orthodox and was approved from all eternity by the Father's eternal counsel. From all eternity the Father had pronounced this sentence: one man must die for all the people of God. In his animosity Caiaphas should have used other terms, he should have said that if this man remains alive he will draw down the rebuke of the Romans on the people and he must be made to die to avoid this evil. He should have used terms indicating that the evil would come from this man, who should be killed in order to avoid being the cause of a greater evil. Instead, he explains himself by a general maxim suggesting that the people are in danger and that one man (must) die for the people, without saying that the danger to the people came from this particular man. The words seem to betoken a generous act by which one man hands himself over to death for the saving of the people. 'He should die' of itself indicates a voluntary death and not an execution of justice.

Caiaphas prophesied involuntarily as a result of holding sovereign office. Through the mouth of this wicked man God wished to make known the reason his Son was to die for the people, that is to say, for all. For Caiaphas was not a prophet by intention, but without knowing it he said 'that one man should die for the people'. He meant to speak of the Jewish people but God had a meaning for these words which differed from that of Caiaphas.

The passage can be explained in two ways. The first (is this). Caiaphas seems to say that the Son of God died for the Jewish people, and God adds what Caiaphas did not prophesy, that he

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died for all peoples to reunite all in the Church of God. These children of God are dispersed over all the earth and do not live united by the same bond that our Lord came to give to souls reunited in his sheepfold. In this sense the evangelist calls all people children of God by vocation and by the merits of Jesus Christ's death which are offered to them. If they had surrendered to that divine grace merited for them by the Son of God's death, they would have become children of God. In this sense Jesus Christ our Saviour died to reunite all as children of God.

But this meaning does not seem as natural as the following. The second (meaning is): that Caiaphas said one man was to die for the Jewish people, that is to say, to save the Jewish people. Thus Caiaphas' proposition was that Jesus must die in order that the Jewish people be saved. The evangelist adds: and not only for the Jewish people, but for the salvation of all the chosen ones of God as well; for the term 'child of God' means chosen; it refers at least to the soul in sanctifying grace at least. In this sense, one could then understand this reunion in two ways: the reunion of the elect in heaven or the gathering together of people by sanctifying grace in the Church. For every unfaithful soul who receives sanctifying grace enters thereby into the Church and thereby receives the fruits of our Lord's death. This latter sense seems more natural.

The evangelist is not speaking here of our Lord's dedication. He did not die just for a part of the human race but gave his life for (all) in general and for each one in particular. St John speaks only of the good that he saw should follow from the Son of man's death. This good was deliverance from oppression and destruction of the entire people (at Roman hands - ed).

The evangelist adds: Although Caiaphas had not the benefit of the people's deliverance in mind, this deliverance was a prophetic symbol proclaiming the deliverance of the children of God, that is to say, of all those who were to belong to the Church of God. Now Jesus Christ's death was to bring about the deliverance of these children of God dispersed throughout the world to reunite them in his Church. Thus heretics cannot conclude against us that Jesus

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Christ died only for the children of God, for there is no question here of applying the prophecy of this blind man to all dimensions of the plan the Son of God had formed, but only to one of two possibilities: either to the perfect application of the Son of God's merits on behalf of the elect alone or to the immediate application of the Son of God's merits to pagans who have become children of the Church. In our Lord's death we must always distinguish what was his intention in dying for all and what happened in reality. The benefit earned by his death was only applied to a certain number who were willing to profit by it and to receive this great blessing from their God.

53. *Ab illo autem die cogitaverunt  
ut interficerent eum.*

53. *So from that day on they took  
counsel how to put him to death.*

What was going on in these hypocrites' minds is now clear. Caiaphas' alleged reason was not so convincing as to be without difficulty. Why did it pass unanimously without contest so that from then on their only concern was how they would have their Messiah killed? From the start of their council they all wished to have him killed but in their hypocrisy they dared not say so. Now that their proud pharisaic conscience was covered up, that is to say, now that they had not to risk being wrongly judged by people, they had no fear of pressing on openly to this great crime. The arrest had been announced by their leader and everyone agreed to it.

But they did not reveal to the people the real reason this man had to die. They said he was a seducer who spoke and acted against the law of Moses and against the prophets. What they show to the people while committing their great crime is zeal for the glory of God and the law.

54. *Jesus ergo jam non in palam  
ambulabat apud Judaeos, sed abiit  
in regionem juxta desertum, in  
civitatem quae dicitur Ephrem,  
et ibi morabatur cum discipulis suis.*

54. *Jesus therefore no longer went  
about openly among the Jews, but  
went from there to the country near  
the wilderness, to a town called  
Ephraim; and there he stayed with  
the disciples.*

We see the Son of God's acting here in the same way as before. He knew that his hour had not yet come and that consequently the Jews had no power over him. He had all power to resist their efforts. He hid himself and did not appear in public in Judaea until the time of his sacrifice arrived. On the other hand, we are shown at the same time, that we must not entirely abandon our ministry because of those who resist us. He withdraws elsewhere but does not abandon his disciples for all that. If he had wished to remain completely hidden he should not have kept his disciples around him. He does not wish us to abandon the works we undertake for his Father's glory, he only wishes us to give in to circumstances when these circumstances absolutely oblige us to give in.

55. *Proximum autem erat Pascha, etc. (sic)*

55. *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.*

56. *Quaerebant ergo Jesum, etc. (sic)*

56. *They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, they should let them know, so that they might arrest him.*

A good number of Jews of different provinces used to go to Jerusalem before Passover in order to prepare to eat the paschal lamb. It was necessary to purify oneself beforehand; at least a big number needed to purify themselves. These were the ones who went to Jerusalem before the Passover. The difference stands out between the simple souls without ambitions and those who are full of themselves seeking rather their self-love than God's glory. The good simple people without pretensions found no major

obstacle in observing God's law and were docile to the inspirations of grace. They came to Jerusalem to be purified and they looked for the Son of God with eagerness. They knew well where to look for him, in the Temple. Not finding him there, they concluded that he had not come to Jerusalem for the feastday, because they were accustomed to see him before the day itself arrived. Why did they seek him? To hear his divine word and see the wonderful works he was doing all the time.

The phrase, 'from the country', could mean from the area where Lazarus lived, the neighbourhood of Bethany. These people, still touched and astonished by the great miracle Jesus had just worked in their area, looked for him in the Temple so as to learn from with his teaching. But what a difference between these simple people and the priests and Pharisees. These latter, preoccupied with their ambition, also looked for the Son of God and that with as much care as the good people, but their intention was quite different as their pride blinded and hardened them more and more.

What blessedness for a soul to be simple, without pride, and what misery to be full of oneself. Now it happens quite often that those placed over others lack this simplicity. They need to watch over themselves more than others, not to be dragged along by their self-love. Ordinarily they show less vigilance, especially when they manage their affairs according to principles that are too human. Once something occurs which challenges their administration or their views, stirred by their pride, they totally oppose it. They make no effort to calculate the good that might come from this challenge to their authority, nor the harm their opposition will cause. They see nothing but the thing that preoccupies them, the administration they have set their heart on maintaining. Their self-love engrosses them and deludes them, their minds and hearts set on their own objectives. This preoccupation, (by deluding them), keeps them from seeing the harm they are doing. If these people could be more distrustful of themselves, if they had purer desires for the glory of God, they

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would not try so hard to develop their own undertakings to the detriment of others. They should first try to estimate the glory that could be won for God by the project they are trying to hinder or completely undo. They would ask if they should modify their opposition to this other venture. If the Pharisees had examined things more diligently, and if they had not held on so much to their authority and manner of exercising it, they would have proceeded with more caution and simplicity. And they would have had the joy of recognizing the Saviour of the world and supporting his teaching.

How many persons in authority are there not who would fall into the same trap if the divine Saviour came back and if his way of life contradicted their views and style of administration? How necessary it is to distrust oneself, how dangerous are dignities and how difficult to be placed in charge! How we need to be pure and holy when we find ourselves responsible for an enterprise.

When pride takes over in people charged with government, when ambition and the wish to be esteemed are the principles of their way of life, and an obstacle to their proud views, ambition and vanity present themselves, all these evils run riot. They blind themselves completely, they find serious reasons for deluding themselves and deceiving others and things end up badly. That is what happened the priests and Pharisees on this occasion.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### The Anointing at Bethany

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| 1. <i>Jesus ergo ante sex dies Paschae venit<br/>Bethaniam, ubi Lazarus fuerat mortuus,<br/>quem suscitavit Jesus.</i> | 1. <i>Six days before the Passover,<br/>Jesus came to Bethany, where<br/>Lazarus was, whom Jesus had<br/>raised from the dead.</i> |
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Jesus planned to make his way to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. First he spent a few days at Bethany in the company of Lazarus. That is how good the divine Saviour is; when he first grants grace to a believer, then, if that person uses it to advantage, he showers his most intimate graces on him, visits him frequently to complete his sanctification. A large number of Jews were waiting for Jesus in Jerusalem and getting ready to listen to his teaching. He left them there and went to find Lazarus. Only after spending a few days with Lazarus did he go to the temple.

The word 'therefore' (*ergo*) refers back to the beginning of verse 55 of the preceding chapter; now the Passover of the Jews was at hand. Although the Passover lasted seven days the evangelist only speaks of six here, because the seventh was a special feast. One could explain this verse in this way – before the six days that precede the Passover – all difficulty would disappear.

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| 2. <i>Fecerunt autem ei caenam ibi, et<br/>Martha ministrabat, Lazarus vero<br/>erat unus ex discumbentibus cum eo.</i> | 2. <i>There they made him a supper;<br/>Martha served, and Lazarus was<br/>one of those at table with him.</i> |
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St Matthew and St Mark also speak of a meal prepared for the Saviour at Bethany on this occasion and say it was at Simon the Leper's house. St Luke speaks once of Simon the Pharisee. Perhaps it was the same person, although the meals in question on the two occasions were not the same. The evangelist says here, 'they made' without saying who. That may be why it is noted that Martha served at table; this would not be news if the meal was at her house. Similarly it would not be surprising that Lazarus was



among those dining. The master of the house had certainly to be there – clearly it was a meal of some importance. But these points were noteworthy if the meal was in Simon's house. Yet it could be said that the evangelist speaks of Martha serving at table in order to show that this saintly woman while advancing in divine love never ceased being active while Mary continued all the while in her love of contemplation. As for Lazarus, he is mentioned in order to recall the great miracle of his resurrection. In any case, the passage as a whole says both things, that is to say it suggests that the meal was not at the house of the two sisters and it also makes these remarks about Martha and Lazarus.

3. *Maria ergo accepit libram unguenti nardi pistici, pretiosi, et unxit pedes Jesu, et extersit pedes ejus capillis suis; et domus impleta est ex odore unguenti.*

3. *Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.*

Mary, with no other thought than her love, gives way to the intensity of her feeling of tenderness. Her action betrays a tender affection that is simultaneously gentle and violent. Picture this woman pierced by a dart of divine love, her heart burning with gentle affection for her beloved. She surrenders her whole being to this movement of the Spirit of God. She takes a most precious ointment and pours out the whole jar on the Saviour's feet and head. Feeling within herself the pressing need to satisfy the tender, violent movement of love that burned her heart, she paid no attention to the price of the perfume used for something that seemed of little importance. For Mary did not know the meaning of what she was doing. She blindly followed the impulse that compelled her; real love does not calculate. The profusion of perfume is made clear especially in the other gospels. Mary was not satisfied to use part of the ointment; she broke the container so as to empty it completely. This showed her intense love.

In the two gospels mentioned above, there is no mention of the

anointing of the feet that St John speaks of, but it is said that she poured the perfume on the Lord's head. St John does not speak of that circumstance because it was already recorded in St Matthew and St Mark. He speaks of what they omitted. It seems then that she began by anointing our Lord's feet; this shows the humility of Mary's love, she liked to be at her Master's feet. In her actions in general divine love moved her to act in this way.

This is a common approach for those who have a generous, humble love. Their love increases, emboldens them and makes them more familiar, all the while preserving humility and a certain reserve. At the Saviour's feet, engaged in wiping them with her hair, Mary became more and more obsessed by her tender love. She broke the vessel containing the perfume and poured it on the head of her beloved. This growth in familiar love is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives himself in greater abundance to people who welcome his inspirations.

Mary did not reflect, she did not think what she was doing, she felt a violent impulse that carried her out of herself and she surrendered to it. Fervent lovers of Jesus act thus, and always have. Mary's love absorbed her completely. We notice this whenever we see her under the influence of intense, divine love. The ointment was so precious that its odour filled the whole house. This is an image of the effect God's genuine love has on us; it spreads its sweet perfume everywhere.

4. *Dixit ergo unus ex discipulis, Judas Iscariotes, qui erat eum traditurus.*

4. *But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said,*

5. *Quare hoc unguentum non veniit trecentis denariis, et datum est egenis?*

5. *"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*

6. *Dixit autem hoc, non quia de egenis pertinebat ad eum, sed quia fur erat, et loculos habens, ea quae mittebantur, portabat.*

6. *This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.*

Good people who act according to these impulses of divine love are not always approved by everyone. Those who have not God's love in their heart, far from being edified by the fervour of good people, disapprove, because they cannot understand the deep emotions that set such people on fire. Their actions repel them instead of affecting them favourably. The response of the worldly is to show coldness and to blame when they can find reason to do so. This comes easily to loveless people, they reason about everything in accordance with their own inclinations while in their hearts they feel only coldness and indifference. Meanwhile their minds look for reasons to disapprove of the devout. If for some reason their feelings are aroused in taking up some case against the devout, they break easily into violence. They fight tooth and nail for their own side, they furnish themselves with arguments ostensibly good and religious but in fact devoid of God's Spirit.

That is what happened Judas in the present circumstance. He was already unfaithful and hardened in sin, he was cold and empty of all feelings of love. Besides, he was a slave to the passion of avarice; this ultimately is what roused him to protest against the anointing of Jesus as the evangelist would have us observe. There were two movements in Judas' mind. The first was his revulsion from this devotional act. Because he was far from loving his Master, from feeling what the holy woman felt, he was to betray his Master a few days later. Obsessed by his passion for money he could not love his Master. The second movement was the wish to have the valuable ointment sold rather than wasted, as he considered had happened in the anointing of his Master, whom the malice of this same perverse disciple was going to betray to death. He asked how much the ointment had cost? In St Matthew and St Mark it is clear that several other disciples at least shared Judas' idea, namely, that it would have been better to sell the ointment and give the money to the poor. They too showed their discontent.

Nevertheless the evangelist attributes these thoughts to Judas'

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passion for money. He leads us to believe that Judas began by being shocked at the action. He haughtily displayed his discontent, inveighed against the holy women and used the specious reason of the needs of the poor in order to disguise his bitterness. The other disciples, good simple people, little enlightened in divine things, got caught and took the side of this wretched man against the one so dearly loved her Saviour. They did this not because they did not love their Master; but from ignorance, unable to understand such intense devotion.

That happens very often to those who have little understanding of divine things. They see a fervent action to which they are not accustomed, and with the greatest of ease they condemn it as imprudent, a false devotion. They do this because they judge it not according to the mind of God but by natural reason and in accordance with how they feel themselves. They take sides too easily with mischievous people whom they hear objecting to these kinds of action. In this way they fall into grave errors and commit faults, as the disciples did on this occasion.

The disciples committed a fault of presumption. The good woman anointed our Lord himself. They should have presumed that he knew what she was doing, he who knew even the most hidden things. Now if eternal Wisdom allowed it to proceed there was reason to believe that he judged it good. But instead of consulting their divine Master they succumbed to their impulses and went astray. A remarkable fact is that often well disposed people who allow themselves to be deceived by their presumption and ignorance of divine things speak critically about decent people of whose actions they disapprove. They rise up against them and oppose their plans, sometimes even more forcefully than do the wicked.

The latter, aware of their own malice and ignorance, are often slow to engage in direct opposition. The former feel sure of the justice of their own case, of their good will and of their Master's favour, whom they serve well or think they do. In this assurance they act more openly. Furthermore they are driven by a

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certain zeal for God's glory, which they think is at stake. In speaking of these disciples St Mark says: 'There were some who said to themselves indignantly' and further on: 'They reproached her'.

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| <p>7. <i>Dixit ergo Jesus: Sinite illam, ut in diem sepulturae meae servet illud.</i></p> | <p>7. <i>Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial."</i></p> |
| <p>8. <i>Pauperes enim semper habetis [vobiscum]: me autem non semper habetis.</i></p>    | <p>8. <i>The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."</i></p>     |

The divine Master makes a twofold reproach to the inconsiderate disciples. For it must not be thought that the words of these two verses are said to Judas alone, they are for all the others who agreed with that wretched man. Jesus says in the plural: Let her alone. The first reproach is against their ignorance. They took to task this devout woman inspired by God, because they did not know why the act had to be performed. There was a hidden mystery, and the disciples, wishing to pose as experts in divine things, exhibited their ignorance instead. Mary performed the anointing in preparation for the burial of her Saviour's body. But why did our Lord attach so much importance to this event? People say it was the custom of the Jews to embalm bodies. But what did it matter to the Lord whether that custom of the Jews was preserved or not? Besides, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea fulfilled this pious custom for our Lord's body. It could also be said that Jesus wished the anointing to be done as a prelude to his passion and to prepare his apostles for that event, though he had already announced it to them many times.

In the other gospels he says: so that wherever his holy gospel is preached this holy act will be spoken of. It was therefore an extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to which he attached importance because it contained a great mystery. Indeed the anointing also signified the union of the Word with the sacred

flesh which continued even after the separation of soul and body – this is primarily what makes his grave glorious. The truth was also pointed out by David: ‘He did not give his holy one to see corruption’ (cf Ps 15:10; Acts 2:27). How could an inanimate body be called the Holy One of God *par excellence* if not because it was a human body united to the divine Word?

There is nothing better than ointment to show the union between the Word and the sacred humanity. Mary chose the most exquisite ointment so that it would demonstrate that the union of the Word with the sacred humanity was the most perfect possible. She began with anointing the feet, to signify the anointing of the Word in the flesh: ‘And the Word became flesh’. The feet are the lowest part of the body, the active part that represents the body. Then she poured the ointment with greater abundance on the head, which represents the Saviour’s spirit. Although the Word is equally united to the body and soul of the Saviour, nevertheless the range of gifts is greater in Jesus’ spirit than in his body.

It could be said again that the feet represent the members of Jesus Christ in his Church. Mary anointed a limited area of Jesus’ body to symbolise the limited union that exists between the body and the divine Word. The head represents our Lord as head of his holy Church, where the anointing of the Word and his gifts are measureless and limitless. She broke the vessel and poured out its entire contents because the divinity dwelt in him substantially. The house represents the Church in general. And so when the sacred head was covered with this holy anointing the whole house of the Church was filled with this pleasant odour. Mary did this in preparation for our Lord’s burial. One could say the breaking of the jar signified the separation of body and soul by death. The body, represented by the vessel of clay, was broken; it was then the anointing of the Son of God spread throughout the whole Church, both on earth and in Limbo. The body was given to the earth to make it fruitful by its union with the enduring Word, and the soul went to set free the Church of Limbo by the omnipotence of the Word to whom it was united.

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No doubt the holy woman did not understand all the mysteries she was symbolising by her actions but she was filled with love and acted with simplicity under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. This is the great advantage that good, simple, fervent souls enjoy. They do not reason too much about their action, they feel the movement of grace and follow it faithfully. Most often they have some idea, at least confused and general, of the prudence and wisdom of their actions; this infused light reinforces their sense of assurance. On the other hand, those who lack simplicity and bargain with God, debate rationally about all their moves and want to make sure nothing is lacking. In looking for human clarity they deprive themselves of the supernatural light that would enable them to see the basis of their actions more clearly, both good and bad points.

The second reproach our Lord made to his disciples is given in verse 8. He replies to the reason they gave for blaming St Mary. They were disturbed by the thought that through this act of devotion harm was done to the poor. Our Lord says that they will always find means to exercise their charity towards the poor, but soon they will no longer be able to exercise charity towards himself. Consequently, Mary did well to spread the ointment on his sacred body. It is quite remarkable that our Saviour compares himself to the poor and only wishes to be preferred to them for reasons of special devotion and in a situation where the need was great. This shows his great goodness and tenderness for people. To better understand the answer divine Wisdom gives, it is worth noting that two motives should guide us in choosing our works of mercy. We have to choose between two kinds of works. The first stems from our love towards God; it is accomplished by acts of religion towards him, by the worship that is his due, for example, by the adornment of his altar. This means using one's possessions to honour Jesus Christ's real body. The second kind is carried out to meet the needs of his mystical members, the poor, but always out of love for him.

The choice between these two objectives, which in themselves

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are valid, may be based on one of the two following reasons. The first is interior devotion. The whole merit of our works of mercy resides in the charity and religious faith that inspire them. These dispositions are their soul. If this impulse draws someone to honour our Lord's natural body, one must yield to the inspiration and give whatever is involved. If a spiritual director basing himself on general principles dissuades the person and makes him or her give to the members of Jesus' mystical body rather than to his natural body, he will often be wrong and will deprive the person of great merit. The spiritual director's reasoning is not what is supposed to rule the penitent's conduct, but the interior grace that carries one's inner devotion to Jesus Christ himself.

A spiritual director who acted in this way would deserve the divine Master's reproach: 'Why do you trouble her? let her alone'. That is the general rule. Exceptions should only be made in special cases where one can judge that God's will is for these goods to be used for a project other than that which attracted the person in the first instance.

The second consideration that should guide us in choosing between works of mercy is our estimate of the relative importance of the project between which one has to choose. When someone experiences a general desire to use goods for some good work, accompanied by no special attraction to a particular cause, then let him or her choose the most important and needy of the different projects.

It must be noted that people, who hesitate too much about, which good work to donate their goods to, are overestimating the value of their gifts. We must realize that it is not the gift in itself that has the merit but the dispositions. Thus the choice is not so exceedingly important although it is necessary and should be made with wisdom and discretion. In extraordinary cases, as in times of famine and so on, the Holy Spirit inspired his saints to prefer the poor to the adornment of churches. In ordinary cases he draws them to both. Thus the Roman Church and other ancient Churches were, right from the very beginning, very rich in sacred

vessels and vestments, as this was approved in the Church. Nevertheless, at the same time, great care was taken of the poor. In public disasters the Popes sold sacred vessels, impoverishing the natural body of their Master to come to the help of his mystical body temporarily afflicted. All this is included in the Saviour's divine words: 'Let her alone' (in other gospels 'Why do you trouble her?'). Let her alone, you are poor spiritual guides, you do not see my spirit urging her to that in order to reveal the mysteries of my life. In verse 8 the equality in value of both concerned is made clear and the preference is given to the most urgent.

9. *Cognovit ergo turba multa ex Judaeis quia illic est; et venerunt, non propter Jesum tantum, sed ut Lazarum viderent, quem suscitavit a mortuis.*

9. *When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.*

The arrival of a crowd at Bethany was due to the great interest that the extraordinary event of Lazarus' resurrection gave rise to. They wished to hear the great prophet who had appeared in Israel and at the same time they were stirred by an intense desire to see the man on whose behalf so great a miracle had been worked. The ordinary people, unhindered by ambitious plans, believed spontaneously, after seeing and hearing such amazing events. Grace reached their hearts and brought about the beginning of faith. If this movement did not always last as long as it should have, that was due to the fickleness of the people, whose hearts were like rocky soil. The seed sank in but dried up quickly because it could not really take root.

10. *Cogitaverunt autem principes sacerdotum, ut et Lazarum interficerent:*

10. *So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus also to death,*

11. *Quia multi propter illum abibant ex Judaeis, et credebant in Jesum.*

11. *because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*



The chief priests were not as well disposed as the people for they had not the people's simplicity which allowed them to be impressed by miracles. Quite often nowadays the same thing happens as happened to those poor arrogant men. They had declared their mind in no uncertain fashion against the Saviour, as an expression of their pride and jealousy. It was hard for them to draw back after going so far in the condemnation they had so urgently pronounced against the Messiah. It had to be upheld. Yet our Lord had just performed a dazzling miracle at the gates of Jerusalem on behalf of a person well known in the city. Lazarus was a living proof of Jesus Christ's divinity, a proof that confounded the chief priests. The priests saw a great number of people forsake their party and turn to the truth. The most effective means of dealing with the problem was to eliminate Lazarus himself. The thought came to them and they would probably have done so had they not succeeded so quickly putting Jesus Christ himself to death. By putting our Lord to death they thought they had solved all their problems and had no more need to make an attempt on Lazarus' life.

### Jesus enters Jerusalem

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| 12. <i>In crastinum autem turba multa quae venerat ad diem festum, cum audissent quia venit Jerosolymam,</i>                             | 12. <i>The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.</i>  |
| 13. <i>Acceperunt ramos palmarum et processerunt obviam ei, et clamabant: Hosanna benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, Rex Israel!</i> | 13. <i>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"</i> |

The people who used to come in from the country to Jerusalem to worship God and draw some consolation therefrom were all the time anxious to see and hear the great prophet, their Messiah, of whose miracles they had heard so many reports. Whenever they

came they wondered if he had yet come to Jerusalem or if he would come soon.

On this occasion they heard people talking on all sides of the outstanding miracle he had worked for Lazarus and they were in raptures. They saw clearly that he was their Messiah and they thought they were on the point of being delivered from the power of their enemies. This was their misfortune. They knew the evidence of the Messiah's coming, but they were in error in thinking that the Messiah was to win material advantages for them. As soon as they saw how weak he was, they were lost for what to say; they left him in a rage, having insulted him.

Later, after the resurrection, when they discovered their great mistake and saw that many miracles continued to be performed in his name and by his power, a good number rallied to the truth. These were the people who had been most sincerely attached to God and who had departed only because they thought they had been deceived. Now they understood better the role the Messiah was to play on earth. Their simple hearts, now well disposed, were drawn towards God, and were faithful to the grace they had been given. But there were coarser ones among the Jews and there were proud ones fanatical for the Pharisees' party, and those were in the great majority. None of these turned back from their error, but continued to oppose the truth.

The first ones, because of the crudeness of their views, could not imagine the spiritual blessings the Messiah was gaining for them. Since there was no earthly profit to hope for from our Lord they would not acknowledge him as their Messiah. The others resisted in a partisan spirit and, through pride, hardened their hearts. Later, when they saw our Lord's disciples succeeding in spreading the faith among the pagans, a partisan spirit spread among them, jealousy took hold of them and they became mortal enemies of Jesus Christ's disciples with a hatred that lasts to this day.

The people formed a procession to go to meet the divine Messiah and showed their great joy and enthusiasm. This was their custom on the biggest feastdays. They had palm-branches

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and went in procession singing: *Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes.* The Jews still have that custom in their synagogue. They took it from the second temple. On the feast of tabernacles they make a procession each day inside the synagogue with palm-branches, singing *Hosanna*. On the last day, the greatest day of their joy, they sing *Benedictus* as well. All these ceremonies are remembrances of what used to be done in the second temple, especially towards the end. One may conclude from all this that this ceremony was deeply religious and that it was of holy joy that inspired the people at that moment. They bestowed on the King-Messiah the honours they used to render to their God in his temple. They called our Lord King of Israel *par excellence* and a blessed King who comes in God's name.

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| 14. <i>Et invenit Jesus asellum, et<br/>sedit super eum, sicut scriptum est:</i>            | 14. <i>And Jesus found a young ass<br/>and sat upon it; as it is written,</i>                           |
| 15. <i>Noli timere, filia Sion: ecce rex<br/>tuus venit sedens super pullum<br/>asinae.</i> | 15. <i>"Fear not, daughter of Zion;<br/>behold, your king is coming,<br/>sitting on an ass's colt!"</i> |

Jesus took a donkey to make his triumphal royal entry into Jerusalem because such was the will of his Father, who had commanded it through his prophet. There are many possible reasons why the divine Messiah was to take possession of his kingdom in this way seated on a poor and lowly mount. Firstly it was to make clear that his kingdom was not of this world, consequently his throne ought not to be adorned with the glittering things of this world, his glory ought to be purely spiritual and not earthly. Secondly he was to show thereby the lowliness of the Word of God's reign over his creatures; he made himself nothing in order to seek a very humble throne for the greatness of his majesty. Thirdly he was only to take possession of his kingdom through humiliations. Fourthly he wanted to show his disciples that all their greatness would consist in their lowliness, it was only in humbling themselves that they would come into the glory of their royalty.



Fifthly it was to teach all those who desire to have him as their king what they must be themselves if he is to reign over them. A king as humble as Jesus only takes possession of humble people, a humble king like that could not rule over proud souls. Sixthly it was because his subjects were a pretty poor and sorry lot. Normally a king's glory is in his subjects; here the opposite holds. The subjects' whole glory is in the divine king, in such a way that they are most glorious because they are subjects of such a king. But if it is normal for a king's glory to shine through his subjects, then the poorer and more wretched the subjects are the humbler and more unassuming the king should be. That being so, Jesus' triumph was bound to be very humble and unassuming. He derives only humiliation and self-abasement from his subjects in contrast with the glory with which he clothes them.

Seen like this Jesus' lowly entry into Jerusalem was a veritable triumph both for him and for us. It was so for him because it showed that his whole glory came from himself alone and not from elsewhere; it was so for us because it showed us that we have a king who is great and glorious in himself, who receives nothing from us but gives us a share in his glory. Even if we cause him to be humiliated, he is a source of glory for us. If Jesus were to appear as he is in himself, he would radiate glory of such brilliance that it would dazzle all creatures. But since he has to appear in a way befitting the subjects he was to acquire, then he had to appear in lowliness and unpretentiousness.

16. *Haec non cognoverunt discipuli ejus primum; sed quando glorificatus est Jesus, tunc recordati sunt quia haec erant scripta de eo, et haec fecerunt ei.*

16. *His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him.*

The disciples did not know this at first; they only knew it after their Master was glorified, for then they began to understand that Jesus possesses all glory in himself and does not receive any from his subjects. All the glory he receives from his subjects is already

his own; his goodness had transmitted it to them. He is glorified by the compassion he was willing to accept from a people composed of poor wretches who now find themselves clothed in the riches and glory of their King. Seeing all this finally after their Master's Ascension the apostles understood what had been written about him and the fulfilment he had given to his heavenly Father's divine will. It could be also said that before the Ascension the apostles' eyes were darkened and they could not yet understand the meaning of Scripture. It was only disclosed to them after the descent of the Holy Spirit, when they remembered the words of Scripture and realized that unknowingly they themselves had accomplished the divine will to perfection.

17. *Testimonium ergo perhibebat  
turba quae erat cum eo quando  
Lazarum vocavit de monumento,  
et suscitavit eum a mortuis.*

17. *The crowd that had been with  
him when he called Lazarus out  
of the tomb and raised him from  
the dead bore witness.*

18. *Propterea et obviam venit ei turba  
quia audierunt eum fecisse hoc  
signum.*

18. *The reason why the crowd  
went to meet him was that they  
heard he had done this sign.*

When Jesus came back into Jerusalem the crowds who had been at Lazarus' resurrection spoke everywhere of the marvel they had just witnessed. They excited the people's wonder and stirred up their unbounded enthusiasm and confidence in the one who worked such miracles constantly, and always with such warm affection and good will. 'He went about doing good' (cf Acts 10:38). It was this wonder that brought the people out to meet him. And the people's joy and rapture were the final provocation that drove the Pharisees in their jealousy to commit such a heinous crime. The greater the eagerness of the people the more the Pharisees hastened to carry out their dreadful plan. The more undeniable and widely known the miracle was among the people, the more the Pharisees hurried to destroy its effect by an abomination of abominations worthy of their malice.

It starts to become clear at this stage why the Saviour attached such importance to the miracle of Lazarus or why he seemed to bring to it a kind of preparation not seen in other miracles. He carried it out with a sort of solemnity not seen elsewhere. The miracle was to lead to the finale of the drama of his life. It was to be the immediate occasion for bringing Jesus to the cross and so gaining the world's salvation. That may also have been what made him delay so much in coming, so that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were destined to spread news of the miracle, would have time to learn of Lazarus' death and come and visit his two sisters. It was also so that the miracle could be accomplished in all its splendour and with all becoming solemnity so as to produce the effect it should have as laid down in the Father's eternal decrees.

19. *Pharisaei ergo dixerunt ad semetipsos:  
Videtur quia nihil proficimus? ecce  
mundus totus post eum abiit.*

19. *The Pharisees then said to one  
another, "You see that you can  
do nothing; look, the world has  
gone after him."*

On learning of the miracle, the Pharisees were far from sharing in the people's sentiments. When passion takes over, we are no longer capable of seeing things straight. Passion always has an effect on our understanding. As soon as the will ceases to be mistress of the passions, as soon as it succumbs to them, everything in us goes wrong. Our understanding, which ought to be our soul's guide, lets itself be dragged along by passion; it is no longer capable of seeing clearly; it allows itself to be pushed hither and thither by passion; it tends to satisfy passion and is interested only in pursuing its goal. The Pharisees were at that point. First they must have thought: this man works great miracles; he could well be sent by God. This thought could have led them on to a serious examination of themselves and in the end they might have been healed.

But no, it was not facts that began to dictate but passion. The miraculous deed of the one sent from God was not what struck



them, for their intelligence had been completely taken over by passion. They were preoccupied about how they might get rid of an enlightened and irksome accuser, a man capable of attracting the people to himself, to the detriment of the Pharisees. They wanted to destroy this man in the people's eyes. And now, very awkwardly for their plans, he comes along doing outstanding miracles and the people get caught, in spite of the Pharisees.

The first thought to strike their blinded intelligence was that their intrigue was not working. This made them impatient, annoyed them, drove them to despair. Look, they said, our activity is getting us nowhere, it is all in vain, everyone runs after him despite all we do. They blanched with despair and fumed with rage. Had they not gone so much against him they would have felt it less, but, as they said, they had done all they could to belittle him in the eyes of the people. Then he performed a miracle and their words went for nothing, they themselves were set aside, and everybody forsook them and rallied to his leadership. What struck them most was that everyone *abandoned* them and *went to him*. 'The world has gone after him.'

In this present century, many people find themselves in the same position. How many people get themselves entangled in self-love? Then they offer resistance to the good and to people who do good. Once launched on this course they seldom retract. They take a stand on their good faith but there is a fundamental flaw in their heart, some passion has taken hold of them. They persecute the servants of Jesus Christ as well as ignore the good they decide not to see, or really do not see as a consequence of passion. Could anyone guarantee they would not have persecuted the divine Saviour himself if they were in the same situation.

That misfortune would probably have overtaken them had they found themselves in that situation. Once blinded they would have been no more capable of recognizing the Saviour than his servants. How important it is then to take precautions against passion and prejudice! How important it is to judge everything in a spirit of charity and gentleness, in great humility and self denial, especially

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when a thing seems to contradict one's own views and interests. If the Pharisees had taken those precautions so great a misfortune would not have happened to them as the one in which they were now about to find themselves.

### Jesus foretells his death

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| 20. <i>Erant autem quidam Gentiles, ex his qui ascenderant ut adorarent in die festo.</i>   | 20. <i>Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.</i>                                     |
| 21. <i>Hi ergo accesserunt ad Philippum, qui erat a Bethsaida Galilaeae, et rogabant eum, dicentes: Domine, volumus Jesum videre.</i> | 21. <i>So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."</i> |

The evangelist recounts these two facts designedly, and in every age we can draw great profit from them if we attend to them ever so little. The Pharisees rejected the Saviour and the gentiles looked for him. There is, first of all, a mysterious meaning in this, which will be explained in verse 23, but the moral that we draw from it is easy to grasp. Why do the Pharisees, for all their knowledge of the law and the prophets, reject the Saviour, while the gentiles for all their ignorance run after him? In putting the same question for all ages, one always comes up with an answer of the same kind. Why have men and women of God always been reprov'd and opposed in the works they undertook for the Master's glory by those who were most qualified to understand their good intentions, the spirit of God that inspired them and the excellence of the work they undertook, while uninstructed people, and even those who are far from God, change their lives and place full confidence in them?

The closeness of this event to verse 19 preceding seems to indicate a mysterious meaning. The Pharisees made every effort to cover over God's blinding light appearing in the midst of the Temple of Israel, in order to quench its brightness and destroy its wonderful effect. And just then when their wickedness was at its

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worst not only did the Jewish people come in their crowds to meet the Incarnate Son of God, doing him homage and expressing their joy, but the very gentiles flocked to him and wished to take part in the people's happiness.

The Pharisees' words are striking. They say, 'Come, we are getting nowhere, the whole world follows him.' Poor blind Pharisees, you speak the truth without realizing it. The whole wide world runs after him whom your pride and hardness of heart make you reject and persecute – the whole world. And how could it be otherwise? The genuine light, the essential light that enlightens every human being, has come into the world, into the world that was created by itself. How could the world not follow it as soon as it became aware of its shining? Truth, which eludes the pharisaic pride of despair, begins to be accomplished at the same time. Not only the Jews but also the gentiles run after Jesus. But the Gentiles only arrive at the moment the heads of the Jewish people reject him. It seems, then, that the evangelist by putting these things together wanted to draw attention to the rejection of the Jewish people and the vocation of the gentiles.

It was not God who condemned the Jewish people, it was the people themselves. Sunk in their pride and wickedness they repelled the divine light that belonged to them by birthright. Thus they consummated their reprobation with their own hands. The divine Saviour rejected nobody. The Son of man did not come to judge the world but so that the world might be saved through him. He who does not believe in the Son of man is already judged (cf Jn 3:17-18). In his immense desire to save this people he used admirable concern and delicacy, making the most of their weakness and forestalling the bad effects of their vices. What burning desire he had to save the whole world! He had come to enlighten the world; how he must have desired to spread the brilliant light of his grace and doctrine into the midst of the utter darkness of heathendom!

But being charged to save the lost sheep of the children of Israel, he did not wish to give the gentile people even the crumbs that fell

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from the children's table. He waited until these latter had trampled them underfoot, refusing to be fed with his gifts and blessings. Then he would shower his graces and enlightenment profusely on the multitude of the gentiles, who had lived until then in a dry arid desert, plunged in an abyss of darkness. If he had shown himself to the gentiles at the same time as he appeared to the Jews, the latter as a result of their pride would have been jealous and would have kept their distance from the life that the Father sent them.

The divine Saviour treated the weakness of the people of God very considerately. He controlled the burning zeal that devoured him for the salvation of the whole human race, and did not distribute to the gentiles the grace he had come to bring them even when his own people did not want it.

But the leaders of the people and a great number of others along with them declined to take advantage of this infinite goodness. While the Jewish people hardened their hearts the Saviour was preparing the gentiles and drawing them by his grace so as to find them ready when their time came. We see this in the event recounted by the holy evangelist. Gentiles came, not yet to adore the Son of God and yield to his doctrine, but to see him. 'We wish to see Jesus'. They were very near the kingdom of God but they had not entered it because those who were invited had not yet, in an irrevocable manner, rejected the gifts of the divine Spouse. It is noticeable that as the Jews withdrew, the gentiles came forward. Later on the apostles would imitate their divine Master. According to his recommendation they shook the dust from their feet when the Jews rejected the word of God and went to bring it to the gentiles. And when the people of Israel was completely rejected, the pagans came to Jesus *en masse*.

This behaviour on God's part deserves our attention. God is infinitely and essentially holy. This holiness of God in his dealing with his creatures appears in two ways: through his mercy and through his justice. When it shows itself through his mercy, it transmits itself to creatures; when through his justice, it rejects them.

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Nevertheless God created us in a design of mercy and in order to communicate himself to us in his holiness, thus his mercy is never taken back. It always far surpasses justice in his dealings with us. Moreover, God's justice only acts when forced to, that is to say, when the creature refuses mercy. First, it acts when forced to for this reason, that God necessarily has dealings with his creature; these dealings have only one purpose: to draw the creature towards himself or to repel it. Now if the creature in his free will refuses God's merciful action of drawing it to himself, then God has to repel his creature. This is his justice. Both actions give him glory, because both are manifestations of his holiness. Therefore we necessarily procure the glory of our Creator God. If we are not willing to bring it about for our happiness by accepting divine mercy, we will bring it about for our unhappiness by becoming the object of his holy and infinite justice.

In the second place, God's justice acts only when forced to. As it is the essence of our creation that God communicates himself to us by his holy mercy, God tends to communicate this to us with all the strength of his divine will which created us. To the extent that his creative will tends to communicate the holiness of his mercy to us, to that extent it is disinclined to repulse us by the holiness of his justice.

His mercy surpasses his justice immeasurably. It becomes superabundant, even towards sinners as long as they live on earth, that is to say, as long as they have free will. Whatever the infiltration of sin into a soul may be, God's justice does not repulse the believer but only the sin that is in him. It follows that as long as we live on earth we ought to rest assured of God's mercy and return to him, whatever our condition. To despair of God's mercy is to disown one's Creator God, or rather it is to deny his role as Creator.

The Creator's propensity to mercy is what produces the wonders of the Incarnation and Redemption. The Redemption is yet a second bulwark against the action of divine justice, it is a second merciful act in favour of creatures. By the fact of the

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Incarnation and Redemption God establishes a new relationship with his creatures, in order to communicate his holiness to them in greater abundance and with a greater sense of mercy. The Son of God became incarnate in order to be united to all creatures; he was immolated to redeem them, give them new life and heal all of them without exception. Therefore he is necessarily anxious to communicate himself to them all, in so far as they are in a condition to receive him into their hearts, that is to say, as long as their wills remains free, as long as they are following his way.

All this relates to creatures in their individuality. There is a certain difference when it comes to men and women united as a people. God often chooses for himself in the world some peoples in particular, to whom he imparts special graces and gifts in a merciful design, which affects all the human race or a large part of it. The situation is the same as for those individuals whom God forms for himself and endows with special gifts for the salvation of a great number of their fellow human beings. Although the gifts and graces are bestowed on those peoples in a design of mercy for the whole human race, the peoples themselves attract God's love of special preference and are the first to profit from these gifts and graces if they are faithful.

That is what happened to the Jewish people. The world was plunged into an abyss of error, evil and sin when God formed this people for himself and destined it for the world's salvation. If this people had persevered, if it had recognised the immense gifts that the Word, Incarnate in one of its members, was going to bring it, it would have witnessed wonderful things and its happiness would have been incalculable. But this people, instead of acknowledging with humility and filial love the benefits that God had granted them, got snared in pride and flaunted the idea that these gifts were its due. They considered themselves a step above other people and looked down on them. Instead of following God's ideas for their salvation, they could not bear his divine grace being imparted to them.

From that moment it was only fair that God would abandon

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them; for what holds for an individual does not hold for a people. God only gave them those graces according to his merciful design in so far as they remained faithful to God's idea from the start, namely, to bring his mercy to other peoples. In spite of their act of rejection, (which God had foreseen - ed). God's initial intention was to reveal himself to other peoples through the ministry of the Jews. The light and life of the Incarnate Word were to benefit the Jews first of all before reaching the gentiles. Hence the divine Saviour did not want to take away the children's bread and give it to the dogs, that is to say, the gentiles, whose quality of life was questionable. The latter were meant to receive the bread of life from the children's hands.

In its pride and jealousy the Jewish people resisted God's plans. The divine goodness went so far as to make allowances for their weakness and malice in order to correct them and make them worthy and capable of fulfilling the mission to other peoples. The chosen people resisted this new act of divine mercy in their regard and hardened their hearts more and more to the point of rejecting God's most precious gifts. The gifts were withdrawn, the people were abandoned to their intransigence, and God chose a few of the most faithful members of this wretched people to carry out the great plans of his mercy among the gentiles. And this people, once they had lost their vocation, fell themselves into darkness.

God's justice was imposed on them in place of the mercy they had rejected. Justice rejected them as a people but mercy is still extended to individual members because they are God's creatures; they were redeemed by the Son of God and they always preserve their free will in order to profit from God's mercy.

These reflections should be taken to heart by those who are chosen by God to evangelize and sanctify the people of the world. Holiness manifests and communicates itself to them under the form of mercy, a boundless mercy for themselves and for many others. God makes of their souls a storehouse, a reservoir of mercy, whence it should flow into other souls to fill them. His plans for them are necessarily choice plans of holiness, like those he had for

the Jewish people. If they are faithful, if they receive these plentiful graces, they will become holier, and then having responded to God's plans they will sanctify many. But if they are unfaithful, the same thing will happen to them as happened to the Jewish people. God's holiness will become a holiness of justice for them and his preference will change to repulsion. God will reject them from before his face, they will lose his precious, bountiful gifts, they will not serve as his instruments for the salvation of souls.

Nevertheless they should not despair when they later recognize their infidelity. First, God is patient with those he singles out by special choice. He acts towards them as the divine Master acted towards the Jewish people. He treats them according to their weakness and awaits their return. In the second place, if God expected great things from them, that did not come about because of their infidelity. Nonetheless, he will not fail to have mercy on them if they come back to him. In that event the gift of mercy imparted to them will be less, because they have rejected what was first imparted in abundance. Yet, if infidelity is serious and persevering, few return to Jesus. We must watch and pray.

Let us come back to our text: 'There were some Greeks'. The gentiles who asked to see Jesus were few, 'some'. The time of grace for the multitude of gentiles had not yet arrived; the Jewish people had first to refuse the light. 'Among those who went up to worship at the feast'. These gentiles were among those who had left the dark abyss of perversion and idolatry. They were making for the heights where the divine light shone with brilliance. 'They went up to worship'. As long as people are plunged in the darkness of error, the abyss of sin and the life of the senses, they have no desire to see Jesus from either near or far. They are hardly capable of knowing that light and life are in Jesus, to be imparted to us. A soul that error surrounds with swollen pride, or to whom access is closed by the way of the senses, is not in a condition to be touched by grace.

To be brought close to the light, that person needs an

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extraordinary shock to snatch it from its abysmal state. To approach Jesus, to desire to see him, prerequisite dispositions are needed – at least good will, which consists in not loving sin, the life of the senses and pride, and the desire to do good. These were the gentiles' dispositions. Once a person has them, he or she comes to see Jesus and, seeing him, is enlightened and sanctified by him.

'To worship at the feast': These good gentiles were among those who acknowledged one God and came to take part in the adoration of the chosen people, yet without submitting to all the observances of the law. These gentiles, quite naturally, had a lowly opinion of themselves, regarding themselves as much inferior to those who belonged to a chosen people of God, who possessed their holy laws, their patriarchal and prophetic traditions. They desired to adore the God of Israel, knowledge of whom had yet only come to them through a dark veil. Naturally they also desired to see him who contained in himself essential light in all its splendour. This humble opinion of themselves was a good disposition for obtaining the desired favour.

'So these came to Philip'. These are the gentiles such as we have seen them with their dispositions, 'these', who introduce themselves to Philip to ask him that they may see Jesus. The children of Israel, sanctified by the law and the prophets, prepared by St. John the Baptist, could see Jesus directly. Besides, they had received the right to that by the promise made to their ancestors. The gentiles could only be introduced by the children of Israel, who were meant to become a people of apostles. Our gentiles entered into God's plans through their humble opinion of themselves. They did not dare to introduce themselves, so they approached Philip, 'who was from Bethsaida' which means the house of fishing. The gentiles were destined to come to Jesus through the fishers of men, that is to say, the apostles. Their coming was one of the first indications of the huge miraculous catch of fish that would be made later. It is evident that this is the impression made on St Philip and St Andrew.

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'We wish to see Jesus'. Poor gentiles, they do not dare to ask for more; it will be enough to see him. They are right. It is enough to see Jesus to be carried away with joy and happiness, to be consumed with divine love, to be sanctified by his holy presence. To see Jesus is a great happiness for the poor gentiles, but what would it be to hear his divine voice, to listen to his holy doctrine, to meet his loving, kindly glance, to be strengthened and inspired by his divine word, to be enlightened, warmed, directed by his adorable light?

22. *Venit Philippus, et dicit Andreae:  
Andreas rursum et Philippus  
dixerunt Jesu.*

22. *Philip went and told Andrew;  
Andrew went with Philip and  
they told Jesus.*

Philip was overjoyed to see the gentiles coming to see Jesus. He hurried to tell Andrew about it! Both of them together made the same haste to tell their Master. Their joy and eagerness is clear from the fact that Philip, instead of leading the gentiles into our Lord's presence to let them see him, went to speak to St Andrew, and then both of them went to speak to the Saviour. Our Lord's reply also shows the satisfaction and eagerness of the two disciples. The apostles had seen the wonderful reception Jesus received on entering Jerusalem, they had seen the crowds throwing themselves in his path noisily and ringing out the cry of gladness, 'Hosanna'. Joyfully, they thought the moment had come when their Master was going to be glorified by all this great gathering of the people of Israel and that henceforth his reign was going to be set up in glory. Now they saw the gentiles also coming to see and acknowledge the Messiah, Son of God and King of Israel. They felt they were on the point of witnessing their Master's kingdom spread to all the peoples. Hence their joy and eagerness. They did not understand what their Master's mission consisted of, nor what kind of glory he was to have on earth. They were still too tied to natural opinions, as we are just going to show and hence their mistake.

But perhaps the feeling this eagerness showed was something different. The apostles had seen the small number of disciples Jesus Christ had among their compatriots; moreover, they did not count much on the enthusiasm the people had just shown. They knew, besides, the opposition of the priests, scribes and Pharisees to their divine Master and the animosity with which they pursued him. All this caused them disquiet. On the other hand they had often heard their divine Master say that the gentiles would replace the Jewish people. It was natural that they would experience a certain joy in the midst of their disquiet when they saw the gentiles coming, and believe that the moment had arrived when the kingdom of God was going to be proclaimed to the people of the earth, when their Master, so misunderstood and so unworthily treated by the Jewish leaders, was going to be glorified by the world of heathendom. This feeling and these thoughts flowed from their love of the divine Saviour. But the apostles, simple and good, it is true, had not yet reached the perfect degree of love that they came to afterwards nor the clarity of vision that was given to them later. In their sadness was something merely natural, something weak and despite their joy and eagerness, something imperfect. They loved their Master tenderly and wanted a human, natural glory for him, they would not be content until they saw him exalted among all human beings. Noting that he had not obtained that glory in the midst of his own people they were saddened, while on seeing the gentiles coming to him they rejoiced in the hope that he would find this human glory among the gentiles.

Two things were wanting to them, which the Holy Spirit supplied on the day of Pentecost. The first was a love that was sufficiently detached from themselves, free from natural pretensions, weaknesses and imperfections. When the Holy Spirit came down on them he gave them a pure, strong, generous love that lifted them above themselves, made them grow and enabled them to suffer everything with joy and equanimity of soul. He gave them the strength and energy of zeal they showed later but

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at the same time he made them masters of themselves, always even-tempered, in joy as in adversity. In a word, until then they were children; the Holy Spirit made fine strong men of them.

The second thing they lacked was an exact idea of what the Son of God had come on earth to do. They kept wanting that human glory for him, external and shining. This was evident in various circumstances. Thus they loved to see great things done by their Master or in his name; they returned from their mission joyfully, saying the very demons obeyed them; the sons of Zebedee wanted to call down fire on Sichar; St Peter would not hear of the bitter chalice Jesus had to drink. But when once the Holy Spirit had come to fill them, they understood that the Word had become incarnate to establish his Father's reign in hearts and not to reign externally in the world. They understood that the Son of God had come to glorify his Father in people by sanctifying them; their sanctification would not be accomplished in the midst of external, dazzling glory, in the midst of pleasures and satisfactions, but on the contrary in the midst of scorn, humiliation, suffering and contradiction.

Then they must have understood how wrong they were when they looked for glittering success for their Master, how small their thinking was, how much they had constricted his glory by making it depend on human beings. They must have felt they had lessened Jesus' glory. Happy are those who glorify him, who run after him, who wish to see him, who listen to his wonderful doctrine, who obey his divine law in fidelity and love. This is the happiness we have to procure for people. But even if the whole earth was filled with admiration and love for Jesus, it would add nothing to his greatness or his glory.

People who are chosen by God to follow in the apostles' footsteps and seek to establish the kingdom of God in peoples' hearts must pay attention to these observations. How many are there who mingle the grace of the apostolate with weakness, imperfection and even wicked faults, sometimes with their evil tendencies themselves? How many are there who become elated

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with joy and sometimes with pride when everything goes according to their will, and collapse, cave in, sometimes become angry, insecure, discouraged, when they experience contradictions and difficulties they cannot overcome? How many are there who misunderstand their Master's mission and consequently their own.

They want external glory; they do not know that their mission is a mission of humiliation and continual suffering, in a word, of being crucified. They have not the greatness, generosity, perfect balance, calm and humble peace of a soul sanctified and faithful to the grace of its apostolate. They are children, often children 'in thinking' not 'in malice'.

23. *Jesus autem respondit eis, dicens:*  
*Venit hora ut clarificetur Filius*  
*hominis.*

23. *And Jesus answered them,*  
*"The hour has come for the Son*  
*of man to be glorified.*

Jesus saw the joy they experienced at the gentiles' approach; he understood the desire they had for his glorification, an imperfect desire for a misunderstood glorification. He gave them instructions, in which he showed them their error and gave them the fundamental principle for their future apostolate.

The evangelist makes it clear from the first word that Jesus' answer took an opposite direction to the ideas of the two apostles. 'And Jesus answered them': and, to give the Lord's words their seriousness and importance, he fixed their attention by saying: 'The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified'. Jesus Christ honoured the world with his presence for thirty-three years; he travelled throughout Judea and Galilee for three years, doing stupendous works and preaching a divine doctrine. The apostles were still waiting for the time when he would be glorified but did not see it coming.

Finally they saw Jerusalem all in a flurry, they saw the gentiles taking part in the general enthusiasm and, all excited, they gave Jesus the news, as if to say: Here at last is your moment to be acknowledged by everyone, to be glorified in the world. And

Jesus replied that indeed the hour of his glory had arrived, but in a sense other than that in which they meant it. The hour was determined in the Father's eternal plans. Our Lord did not say 'the period', 'the day', but 'the hour'. His Father's divine will had regulated every instant in which the divine mysteries were to be accomplished; it had determined the moment when the Son was to be glorified. The apostles found the time long. They were impatient to see their Master's words accomplished because they based their calculations on their own desires (for worldly success, - ed). They paid no attention to the heavenly Father's will, or rather they would have wished the divine will to accommodate itself to their imperfect natural desires.

The Saviour was not to be affected by these imperfect desires. He only brought forward his 'hour' once, at Mary's prayer, because that prayer was all holy and all perfect, devoid of all unseemly eagerness and all purely natural sentiment. The apostles' request was different. Nevertheless, as long as he only noted in them a desire and love that were too natural he was patient with them and did not rebuke them severely. Later on he was to impart the abundance of the Holy Spirit, who would make new men of them, men after his own heart, full of his spirit and power. But is he going to treat with the same gentleness and patience those people who follow their steps in the apostolic life in due course throughout the length of history? They have received the fullness of his Spirit by the imposition of hands and yet are often just as imperfect as the apostles were during his human life on earth, just as weak, just as little advanced in his ways, just as impatient and incapable of waiting for God's moment, with the same misunderstanding of Jesus' glorification on earth. Let them listen to their Master's instruction and engrave it deeply in their hearts. It was not only meant for the two apostles who heard it but for all those who were to follow him until the end of time.

Note that Our Lord said the hour 'had come' when the 'Son of man' would be glorified. He spoke of the hour as having already come. Now the hour that had come was the hour of sorrows, of

disgrace, of distress and death; he called it the hour of glorification. He spoke of glorification as a human being, 'the Son of man'. Now, all the weight of sorrow, humiliation and the most ignominious death fell on the Son of man precisely. Why did our Lord speak of the glory of the Son of man, he who said in another place, 'I do not seek my own glory, but the glory of him who sent me'? And what brought him to give the title of glory to the extremes of degradation and disgrace? To understand this passage and what follows up to verse 29, it is imperative to have a correct idea of creaturehood.

The creature has no glory of itself, whatever glory it can possess is given to it by God, 'to whom alone be honour and glory'. The creature of itself has only the baseness of being nothing. The glory God gives a creature is something real; it becomes a glorious attribute, inhering in and becoming akin to the nature of that creature. A creature thus glorified by God acquires in its substance the splendour of glory, as the splendour of light is inherent in the light of the sun. The splendour that God gives the sun does not consist in the fact that people praise it and speak highly of its brilliance. Likewise the glory that God gives the souls he chooses as his own does not consist in the fact that people praise, admire or revere them. It is inherent in them, it is given by God, it belongs to God. The sun receives the splendour of its light from God and people benefit from it without being able to increase or lessen it. It is very wrong then to identify our glory with the praise of others. We are wrong to consider people glorified because other people exalt them.

This false notion has its roots in the tendency of our pride to feed off the esteem of other people, to look for greatness in people's thoughts, judgments and opinions. This notion is all the more wrong for being built on pride, which is in fact a vacuum devoid of glory. Where there is pride there also the creature is reduced to the state of creaturehood, independent of the Creator. The creature, by itself and of itself, has only nothingness. This emptiness of glory is essential to pride. Pride has an invincible

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tendency to seek glory, glory inherent in the creature as such. There follows from this another invincible tendency, to seek glory in the good opinions of others, a glory which is basically a lie, since the creature to which it relates has only its own nothingness and consequently is devoid of true glory. It is formally a lie, for it only exists in the form of an idea held by others of the one whom they esteem. The latter draws nothing authentic from this good repute to really enhance itself. All it can do is draw arrogant satisfaction from it and therefore descend even lower. This will be camouflaged behind an imaginary but false façade of a seeming improvement but without any basis in reality. On the day of eternal revelation, this low status will be changed into a state of immense confusion while genuine glory will be changed into immense splendour.

Genuine glory is from God and in God alone. When he imparts a share of it to his creature, it is a gift he makes to improve it and to give it an excellence above the beings that resemble it, sometimes even above beings that are superior to it by nature. In this way our Lord's sacred humanity, the blessed Virgin and perhaps some other Saints were raised above the angels. God's gift to them constituted an excellence that surpasses that of the angelic nature, which in general is far superior to human nature.

Glory is communicated in two ways. First by a pure gift of God, who in himself and by himself sheds the lustre of glory on the created being without merit or participation on its part. This glory was given to the sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Incarnation of the Word; it is given to us in the sanctifying grace that comes through the sacraments, or by other means in extraordinary cases. This gratuitous communication of glory is made with the object of leading the creature to accomplish a point of divine will. This in turn brings the creature another glory, which is given in this world, and culminates in the glory of the kingdom of God.

Thus there is a first glory, a pure gift of God independent of the creature's action. This is not the glory in question here. There is another glory attached to the accomplishment of God's plan and

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corresponding to that a glorious state in eternity in the bosom of God.

The glory that is imparted to the created person in accomplishing God's plan consists principally in the reign of God within it. This reign of God over the created person and in them has the effect of bringing him to perfection. When the created person immolates and sacrifices himself as far as he can for the love of God, God's plans for him are being carried out. Then the created person, giving free play to the divine will at work within himself, empties himself and allows God to take charge. All the powers of the soul are transformed and inspired by the active power within it so that God's action overrides them all, even the most innate tendency of every creature, that of self-preservation. Without doubt this is the reign and life of God in his creature, reign and life in the highest degree possible. Consequently the greatest glory consists in this most perfect inner surrender to God. That is why Jesus Christ said: 'The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified', speaking of his passion and death. He said, 'the Son of man', because in speaking of the glory in self-sacrifice he was speaking of the glory of the Son of man in his created nature.

But more was involved here than the glory of a creature giving itself to the Creator. God's design in fashioning Jesus Christ's sacred humanity, in the Incarnation of the Word, in the passion and death of his Son, did not only consist in raising one individual nature above other creatures but in using it to fashion a new creation in the order of grace. The creation of the universe was an emanation of the omnipotent goodness of God. The creation of the order of grace, bringing about the redemption of the human race, which had fallen to nothing (as regards that order of things), is an emanation of his power, holiness and mercy.

The passion with its pains, anguish degradation, and death with its annihilation of human life, linked the sacred humanity with God's omnipotent holiness and mercy. Such was God's plan, to live as the human being Jesus with his creative strength of holiness

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and mercy, so that with it and through it he would construct his new creation in grace, mercy and holiness.

[The Venerable Father Libermann's manuscript finishes here]





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# JEWISH EYES

## A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

FRANCIS MARY PAUL LIBERMANN CSSp  
TRANSLATED BY MYLES L. FAY CSSp

PART 3  
*Chapters IX - XII*

How does a modern Jew see Jesus? Francis Libermann's conversion to Christianity belongs to a Jewish movement towards Jesus dating to the mid-decades of the 19th century in France. Born in Saverne in eastern France in 1802, Francis Libermann was the son of the local rabbi. As his father's favourite son, he was meant to succeed him. But when he left the ghetto, he drifted into fashionable French atheism. The light came with a copy of St John's Gospel in unpointed Hebrew which a fellow student asked him to translate.

Baptized a Catholic on Christmas Eve 1826, Libermann decided to study for the priesthood in the Paris diocese. He went on, however, to found a missionary society. This he subsequently merged with the Holy Ghost Congregation. Libermann wrote this commentary in 1840 while awaiting papal approval for his mission initiatives.

Libermann's devotion to Jesus was intense. He saw him as the Holy One of Israel in human flesh. Everything a devout and zealous Jew feels about his God is experienced by Libermann in his relation with Jesus. For him, he is the Messiah, the Saviour. To know him is to live. Everything else in life must be subordinated to this adoring and loving relationship. That relationship is real, reciprocal, communicative, implying immediate and mutual knowledge. The knowledge brings him, like Moses before the burning bush, to his knees before the mystery of God revealed to his loving gaze.

The Gospel of St John for Francis Libermann was not a book about past but about the way he and every Christian called to faith can relate to the One True God made flesh in Jesus Christ.